Jesse Jackson's Serbia Stunt The Editors

Kosovo's Lost Generation
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THE NEW REPUBLIC

May 24, 1999

The Hero Myth

John McCain and America's Longing for a Political Savior

By DAVID GRANN

Naval Air Station, Mississippi, 1966

PLUS: DANA MILBANK
The Candidates Think Big

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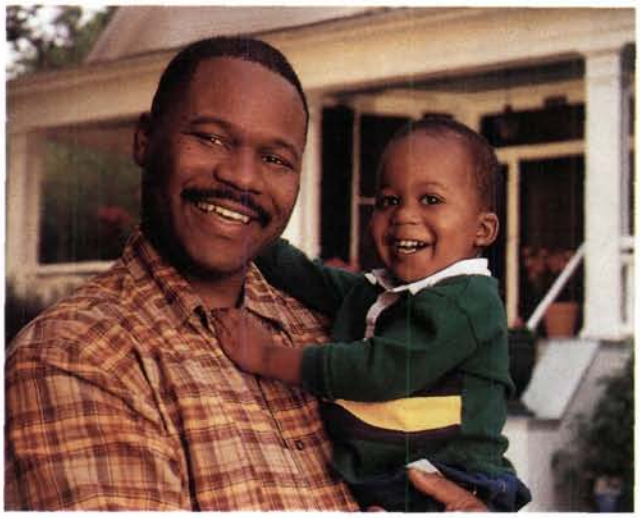

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A Journal of Politics and the Arts

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CORRESPONDENCE

Geezers strike back

TO THE EDITORS:
It is becoming increasingly annoying to read about how the wealthy "geezers" are burdening the youth of the nation by retiring younger, collecting Social Security, and living off the fat of the land ("Off Golden Pond," by Robert J. Samuelson, April 12).

Why a credible publication like yours should go along with the view that it is the wealthy retirees who are burdening the system I fail to understand. The age for collecting Social Security is going up, not down. Retiring early will not get retirees any increases in benefits. Those who fall in the upper income bracket will have paid in to Social Security considerably more than they will ever collect from it. This will be increasingly true as time goes on.

If we need more money to run the federal government, let's raise the marginal tax rate. The wealthy geezers will be glad to pay their share, so long as they are not unfairly singled out to bear the burden for a long-term fiscal policy of running deficits.

STUART DUNN
New York, New York

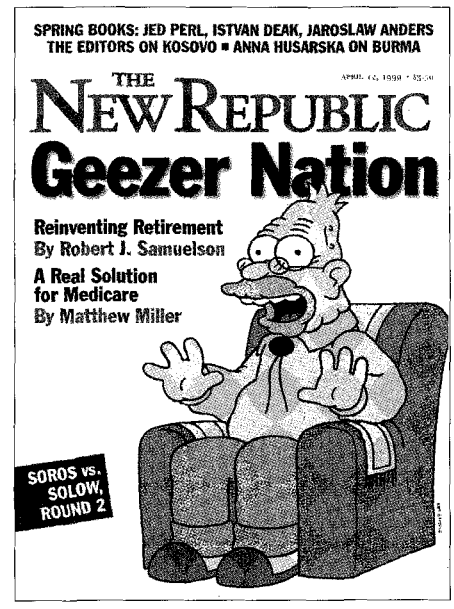
TO THE EDITORS:
Robert J. Samuelson concludes his essay by warning that, if present old-age benefits are continued, "our children will call us greedy geezers." But he also notes that, in 1940, 22 percent of retired men over 65 lived with children or relatives, while today only about five percent do.

Those righteously indignant children Samuelson imagines will have by and large been freed from the burden of caring for their aged parents by the very government programs Samuelson wants to scale back. On the other hand, many of them will—according to current practice—have lived at home until they were well into their thirties while the geezers-to-be provided them with room and board. So who's got a right to be angry?

WILLIAM GEBAUER
New Orleans, Louisiana

TO THE EDITORS:
Robert J. Samuelson's "Off Golden Pond" offered an interesting look at aging but left me wondering about his angry conclusion: retirees aren't really worth a damn unless they're out there busting rocks with everyone else.

I was one of those involved in the corporate realignment craze. Offered the choice of accepting a generous "golden handshake" or remaining in a less-than-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THE NEW REPUBLIC
Geezer Nation
Reinventing Retirement
By Robert J. Samuelson
A Real Solution for Medicare
By Matthew Miller
SOROS vs. SOLOW, ROUND 2

stable work environment, I (and 9,000 others) chose the former. I'm home now, working hard to prove the old platitude that volunteering time for family, school, church, and community does indeed make a difference.

Retirement and parasite are not, as Samuelson suggests, one and the same.

LOUIS OSBORNE
Normandy Park, Washington

Balkan rumbling

TO THE EDITORS:
If George Orwell needed a crowning vindication at the close of the twentieth century, he has had it. I write from Moscow and feel as if I should lower my voice and peep over my shoulder before expressing appreciation for your recent coverage of the Balkan crisis.

Here in Moscow that coverage is a glimpse through the looking glass. We, instead, are treated every evening to precisely one-half the news, the Serbian half, from the Belgrade-based headquarters of once Soviet and now Russian news agencies. The bias is especially strong on television, where images are, after all, worth a thousand words: Serbia's David against NATO's Goliath; rock concerts for cheekily gallant, bull's-eye-clad youth; NATO rockets playing chicken with Belgrade's maternity wards.

Before and during the bombing campaign, we heard and saw absolutely nothing about Albanian civilians—threatened, deported, or otherwise—though we did hear from time to time about "Albanian terrorists," a favorite phrase of Russia's Soviet-trained Foreign Ministry. The latter's former chief, now de facto head of state, Yevgeny Primakov, might be responsible for the 50 percent news blackout,

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having, on March 25, according to an authoritative English-language newspaper, convened the "heads of major Russian media outlets to discuss their handling of the Kosovo crisis"—whatever that means.

In the absence of information about the humanitarian motivation for the bombing campaign, NATO is portrayed as *(a)* having lost its collective mind or *(b)* simply out to hammer home to the Russians how laughably inconsequential a role they play in the New World Order. The universal reaction here, even among "normal" people, has been self-righteous rage. "Brutality," "savagery," and "barbarism" were the words used to describe NATO's actions, though no such words have been applied to Milosevic's policemen, indeed because their activities in Kosovo have gone unreported here. The Communist Party, a new spring in its step, has taken the whole event as a gift of major proportions. A week into the campaign, once the (Serbian-filtered) images and the (sock-it-to-Russia!) logic of this conflict were firmly implanted in the public mind, I began to hear very rare Russian voices (one on radio, one in print, none on television) suggesting there was, ahem, a humanitarian crisis with lots of extra Albanians where they had not been before, and maybe this had something to do with NATO's actions! Alas, now that the bombing campaign has proven utterly ineffective, or, rather, fully counterproductive, in stanching the flow of refugees, those lone voices seeking to see NATO's point are gone again. And, in a truly sickening piece of Soviet-style mischaracterization (whose trademark was to be arguably true while essentially false), the reportage unequivocally implies that the Albanian refugees have fled NATO bombing raids.

I no longer speak about this mess with my Russian friends. They wear grim "I told you so" smiles and are in no mood to read Western coverage of events. At this point, in any case, I do not think they would believe it. They hold that history will blame NATO and President Clinton for destroying the fragile comradely relations we all once enjoyed.

AMY CRUTCHFIELD
Moscow, Russia

Historical rights

TO THE EDITORS:

Although I generally agree with the criticism leveled against Milosevic, I find your characterization of another nation's history as "national mythology" offensive ("Mean Business," April 12). Wouldn't you be offended if a European referred to Concord or Valley Forge as "American mythology"? Such a crude condescension reflects the narrow parochialism Europeans accuse us of possessing.

CONSTANTINE FARMANS
Torrance, California

War and punishment

TO THE EDITORS:

Jacob Heilbrunn said it best ("Full Retreat," April 19): "If the century-old U.S. interest in stability in Europe is not still a defining tenet of American foreign policy, what is?" As a Normandy veteran, I can only applaud the president's decision to act on that basis, instead of waiting for polls to tell him what to do. (He should take comfort in the success of another independent initiative, his economic program—passed without a single Republican vote—which ensured fiscal sanity and allowed for our present prosperity.)

Still, as a student of American history, Clinton knows that the voters have repudiated his party after every "Democrat war" of this century—Wilson (1920), FDR/Truman (1946), Truman (1950–52), Johnson (1968). And, as a student of American psychology, he knows that people generally are terrified at the sight of body bags arriving from abroad, although they remain curiously unmoved by the daily carnage in our inner cities and on the highways.

WILLIAM M. BURKE
San Francisco, California

continued on page 49

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TRB

FROM WASHINGTON

Saving the World

THE "THIRD WAY" is a political strategy identified with Bill Clinton in the United States, Tony Blair in Great Britain, and Gerhard Schroeder in Germany. It is a self-conscious alternative to the old left and new right. It seeks to promote rather than hinder the creation of global capitalism but at the same time to foster greater social equality and community within and among nations. "Its core value," Al From, the president of the Democratic Leadership Council (DLC), has declared, "is community." The practitioners of the Third Way have defined it primarily as an approach to welfare reform, progressive taxation, and vocational education, but it is also integrally related to foreign policy; and its success or failure may be linked to the NATO mission in Kosovo.

One connection is obvious. A disaster in Kosovo will imperil many of the current NATO governments. In the United States, failure could also derail Vice President Al Gore's presidential candidacy. But there are deeper connections that could threaten the Third Way itself. Its basic objective is to foster social justice without fueling class resentments. In the twentieth century, this kind of liberal communitarianism has worked best when the United States and other democracies faced totalitarian adversaries during World War II and the cold war—when our international commitment to democracy fed our commitment to democracy at home. When America's commitments have lapsed—during, for instance, the 1920s—an irresponsible individualism has triumphed.

At a forum on the Third Way sponsored by the DLC at the end of last month's NATO conference, Clinton and Blair both drew the connection between the Third Way and Kosovo. Blair made it the clearest. The Third Way, Blair said, "applies internationally as well as nationally." Kosovo "is every bit as much about our values as it is about strategic interests." Kosovo, he argued, was about extending the concept of "active community" from the nation to the globe.

The success of the Third Way also depends upon the creation of a progressive bloc of nations that can carry forward its approach. This is particularly true in global economics. The Third Way is based on the assumption that, because of global competition, purely national economic initiatives can often prove destructive. Trade barriers, for instance, can hinder technological development. The corollary of this—as understood by Clinton, Blair, and Schroeder—is that many economic and environmental ills that can't be attacked nationally can be addressed through international organizations and multilateral initiatives such as the World Trade Organization and the global warming treaty. The Third Way leaders favor regulating the global economy to avoid recurrent financial crises and a growing divergence between rich and poor nations. At the DLC forum, Schroeder called for the "internationalization of politics" to tame "financial speculators." Clinton favored a new "framework" to keep international markets from "getting out of hand." Clinton, Blair, and Schroeder have also advocated some kind of new labor and environmental regulations.

Extending outward an "active community"—or promoting what Blair adviser Anthony Giddens calls "cosmopolitan democracy"—also requires the creation of a progressive bloc of nations that can act together not simply in their own immediate interests but on behalf of a greater democratic ideal. Kosovo is the first real test of this Third Way bloc of nations. It is a different kind of war—waged not only to achieve stability in the Balkans but also to uphold a standard of morality. Blair and Clinton provided much of the impetus and the initial rationale for intervention. It is their war—and a war that epitomizes their new political philosophy.

Success in the war, meaning at a minimum the guaranteed safe return of all Kosovar refugees, would strengthen Clinton and Gore, Blair, and Schroeder. It would create an important precedent for international action and help establish an ideal of democracy and human rights that could nurture a spirit of community within the different nations. Unfortunately, however, success in Kosovo looks extremely unlikely. What appears most likely is that NATO will agree to a face-saving compromise in which a U.N. occupation force oversees the repatriation of a relatively small number of Kosovar Albanians. Such a result would be a defeat for civilization in Europe. But, secondarily, it would also be a setback for the Third Way.

The war's failure would buttress the argument that foreign policy should be based solely on narrow national interests rather than on the attempt to create a democratic community of nations. In the United States, it would reinforce Republican isolationists who gauge foreign policy issues on what they will mean for department store sales in Houston or the price of mutual funds. And the same sentiments might well extend to international economic issues, limiting support for international economic and environmental regulation. At a time when Clinton and Representative Richard Gephardt are forming a new consensus in favor of regulated free trade, popular opinion could tilt toward Pat Buchanan's protectionism.

Failure in Kosovo would, of course, give any kind of internationalism a bad name. It would not necessarily spell the end of NATO, but it would doom that organization to serving as a kind of expensive professional association for European and American generals, in which potentially unruly Eastern Europeans could be taught manners and decorum. NATO would no longer contemplate intervention in places where its own members' survival wasn't immediately challenged—and, even then, who knows? Failure in Kosovo would reinforce a diplomacy based militarily on spheres of influence and economically on regional trading blocs.

Perhaps these predictions are too dire, but there is a clear precedent in the twentieth century. Like the proponents of the Third Way, American progressives of an earlier era saw their own fate bound up with America's greater role in the world. In *The Promise of American Life*, Herbert Croly, the founder of TNR who would later advise Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, argued that the "vigorous assertion of a valid foreign policy" would force the United States "into the adoption of a really national domestic policy." Croly and Roosevelt believed that, by becoming involved in world affairs, Americans would come to appreciate their own common values and commitments and would endorse a progressive national reform agenda. Later, these progressives, who also saw themselves as creating a Third Way between socialism and laissez-faire capitalism, believed that out of World War I would come not only a new progressive bloc of nations but also an abiding commitment to community at home. They would, however, be sorely disappointed. The war's aftermath would not bring democratic renewal but an end to progressivism itself. Kosovo is not, of course, World War I, but it can still be asked whether today's proponents of the Third Way will eventually suffer the same fate as their progressive forebears.

JOHN B. JUDIS

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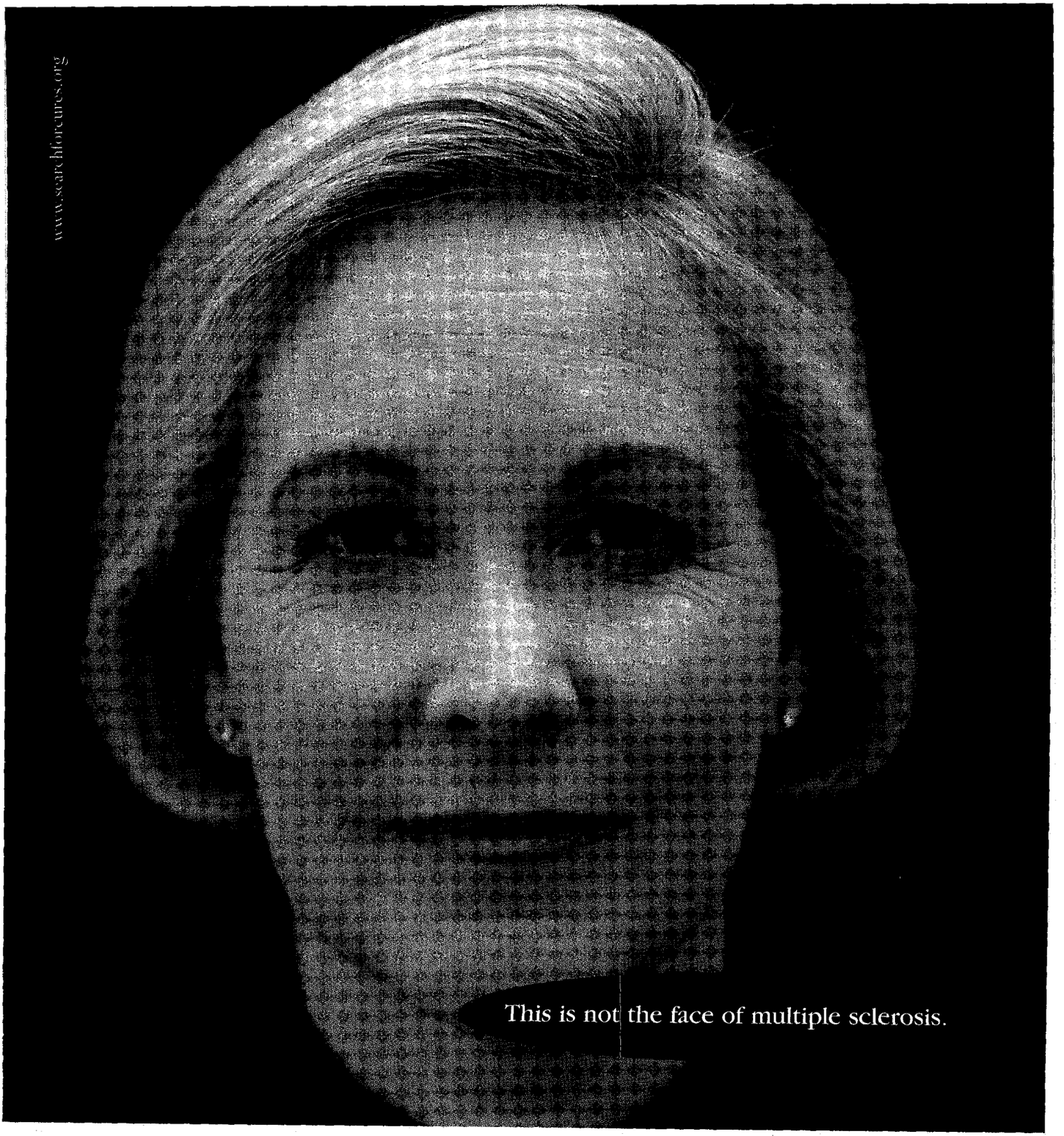

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WHITE HOUSE WATCH

Big Think

Hey, what's the big idea?

That seems a relevant question to ask at this early stage of the presidential campaign, a time when everybody seems to be judging candidates on whether or not they think grand thoughts. Here, roughly, is the handicapping so far:

Bill Bradley: Size XXL ideas
Al Gore: Itsy-bitsy ideas
George W. Bush: No ideas at all

None of these caricatures is quite right, though each has a grain of truth. So far, Bradley has presented lofty goals but no proposals. Gore has a profusion of proposals that obscure his big goals. And Bush, while endowed with a philosophy, is yet to present either goal or proposal. In the end, all three will have a mixture of big goals and small proposals to achieve them. But that doesn't stop the big-idea buzz.

Bradley started the comparison, criticizing the "postage-stamp proposals" of Clinton-Gore. While Bradley is off combating racism and giving health care to all, Gore is establishing a telephone line for traffic jams and a bill of rights for airline passengers. "It's not just the small things but the big challenges," Bradley likes to say. Lefty Senator Paul Wellstone, a rather small man himself, picked up on the big thing when endorsing Bradley. "We Democrats are the party of big ideas," the diminutive Minnesotan proclaimed.

In truth, the really big ideas in this campaign are the bad ones: Gary Bauer's proposal to make all abortion illegal or Pat Buchanan's plan to close the borders. But, for mainstream candidates, the era of big ideas is over, as it should be. Failed gambles on massive programs are being replaced with goals and a multitude of experiments to achieve them—the "let a thousand flowers bloom" approach that worked so well with welfare reform. Candidates talk of the vision thing, but their proposals by necessity are small ones. The big idea is now a goal, not a prescription.

Gore and his allies are frustrated with Bradley's big-idea monopoly. David Axelrod, a consultant and Gore man, likens Bradley's big-ideas theme to a toy cannon. "He rolls the cannon out, lights the fuse, and the flag comes out and says, 'POP,'" Axelrod told the *Chicago Tribune* in a typical rendition. Bradley aides acknowledge big ideas are "shorthand for big priorities," not specific plans. Bradley talks of nurturing oaks rather than houseplants, but even oaks begin as saplings.

Bradley's five big ideas—racial unity, universal health insurance, a fight against child poverty, a strong American role in the global economy, and campaign finance reform—are all noble. He has yet to say, however, how he would achieve these things. In his recent speech on race, for example, he made clear that there wasn't much he could do as president, other than use the bully pulpit and require federal agencies to hire minorities. But

that doesn't get beyond such banalities as Clinton's race initiative. Senator Bradley was known for solid but bite-size solutions to race problems, landing an empowerment zone in Camden, New Jersey, for example.

In a variety of areas, Bradley's legislation was Gore-like in scope, such as his delving into California water conservation and canned-mushroom tariffs. On health care, Bradley recently made a major proposal: means-testing Medicare. But his spokesman backtracked, declaring, "This is not a statement of policy." On his global big idea, Bradley has been fuzzy on specifics. Speaking to the UAW in Iowa about NAFTA, the free-trader declared: "We need to look at the agreement, see how it's working, and then make judgments."

George W., for his part, still lives in the cocoon of Austin, running but not yet campaigning. This allows him to criticize the administration without offering an alternative. "Clinton sounds like a superintendent of schools," says Karen Hughes, his spokeswoman. "Governor Bush will offer a vision." The operative word seems to be "will," for he is studiously avoiding any previews. The congressional Republican retreat into isolationism cries out for a strong rejoinder from Bush, but he offers little, calling the Kosovars "Kosovians" (and the Greeks "Grecians"). Similarly, after the Littleton tragedy, Bush said he supported a gun-control measure that a Texas House committee had already killed, apparently without Bush's objection.

These blunders give the impression that Bush is an empty vessel. This isn't so, at least not entirely. Among the big ideas Bush has brought to Texas is a call for every child to read by the third grade. He also has big cultural goals, such as reducing teen pregnancy. His solutions for these big goals, not surprisingly, are small proposals—an end to social promotion here, a mentoring program there. "The times just don't call for major change," says one Bush adviser.

That leaves Gore, who has the opposite problem. He seems so full of proposals he loses the big picture. For example, while Bradley's race speech was full of platitudes, Gore struck back with a speech to the Detroit NAACP laden with numbing detail: $3.5 billion in minority business loans, 90,000 empowerment zone jobs, 2,000 community police officers, 1,300 drug counselors. The two rivals' views are largely the same—as, indeed, they are on many issues—but, while Bradley calls it a big idea, Gore rattles off line items.

Gore is trying to package his ideas more broadly. When asked at a gathering last month what a Gore presidency would be about, Gore ticked off several bigthink ideas: "truly revolutionary change in our public schools," universal preschool, a campaign against global warming, a prosperous transition to the Information Age. "I'd like to restore the American spirit to our body politic," Gore said, a concept as vaguely satisfying as any of Bradley's.

Gore also continues to alter the balance of his staff. Until now, he has surrounded himself with a Harvard-heavy gang of Washington whizzes, who are not necessarily the most streetwise or the type willing to speak bluntly to him. Now, Gore has brought a couple of street fighters on board to join Craig Smith, an old Clinton operative. He persuaded Michael Whouley, a tough-talking adviser from Boston, to move to Washington. He also recruited as his political director Donna Brazile, a Southern black Catholic from LSU. She helped engineer the House Democrats' upset in '98 and now will offset Gore's Ivy League crowd. "We have a lot of advisers—we're saturated with advisers," she says. "I'm looking for the activists. We've got to return Al Gore to the streets." Now *that's* a big idea.

DANA MILBANK

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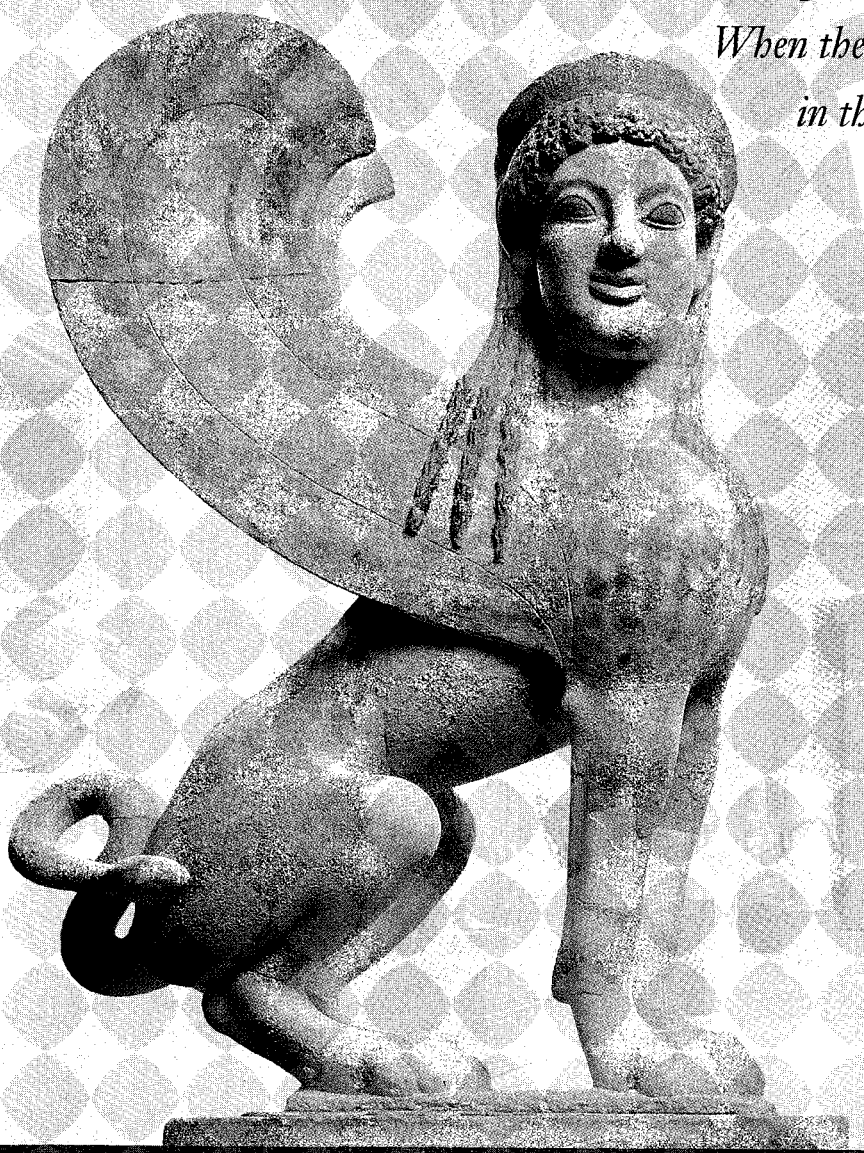

Capital and finial in the form of a sphinx (detail), Greek, Attic, ca. 530 B.C., Munsey Fund, 1936, 1938. Background: Mary and Michael Jaharis Gallery. Photos by Bruce White.

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Where We Stand

A commentary on public education and other critical issues

Defending Human Rights

By SANDRA FELDMAN, President
American Federation of Teachers

As terrible images of shattered lives and lines of distraught refugees from Kosovo have become an integral part of our everyday experience, Americans and our allies have responded with strength of heart and generosity of spirit. Nearly two-thirds of Americans believe our involvement there is right. The real debate taking place is over whether we went in early enough and whether we should send ground troops.

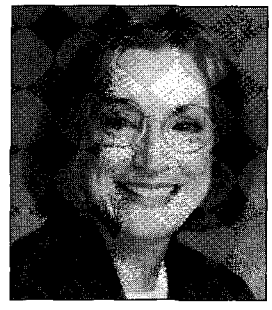
Whatever your opinion—and mine is that we need to do *all* we can, sooner rather than later—it's useful at times like these to reflect on the extraordinary experience of American democracy. Because in the end, our humanitarian impulses and our resolve in dangerous situations, like the one in Kosovo, are tied to our underlying understanding that our own freedom as a nation depends a great deal on how much we're prepared to sacrifice for the rights of others.

In just one month from now, we'll be revisiting some other horrific images from another part of the world, those of the June 4, 1989, massacre of innocent students and workers in Tiananmen Square.

The tenth anniversary of Tiananmen Square comes at a time when our government is working on the nature of our "engagement" with China—and engagement clearly is necessary. It's an opportunity to reassert our support for those in China still imprisoned for trying to exercise basic rights, and also for those who continue to struggle for the right of free association, the right to organize unions, the right to speak their minds freely—despite the brutal crackdown they experienced and know could come again at any moment. We need to make sure attention continues to be paid to people like Xu Wenli and Wang Youcai, who received prison terms last year for attempting to establish an independent political party.

The Basic Principles

Whether in China or Yugoslavia, for educators and trade unionists, the standards remain the same. Is there a right of free association? Can dissenters exercise rights of free speech? Is there freedom of the press? The American Federation of Teachers, along with the AFL-CIO, has long been at the side of those who struggle for basic human rights, not just in our own country during the Civil Rights Movement but elsewhere in the world. During the Cold War, we helped dissidents in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and the former Soviet Union in many different ways. In South Africa, we provided support to black trade unionists in their fight against apartheid; in Chile, we aided our sister teachers' union in the struggle against Pinochet; and we have supported democracies in other places in the world.



Our own freedom depends on how much we are willing to sacrifice for the rights of others.

But as has become clear in the recent post-Cold-War past, and certainly as we see in Kosovo, the world remains a dangerous place, complicated by the fact that we live more and more in a global economy, linked by important economic ties to some nations whose human rights policies we abhor. We have to balance many considerations. But when it comes down to a choice, there's no question about where we should stand.

In Kosovo, complexities notwithstanding, we must continue to make it increasingly hard for Slobodan Milosevic to carry out his evil campaign against the basic human rights of the Kosovars. As for China, we must make sure the government is constantly aware that the rest of the world supports the Chinese citizens who insist on exercising their human rights.

The Global Petition Campaign

One way we can support human rights in China is by joining the Global Petition Campaign. The petition, which can be signed on the Internet (at **www.june4.org**), was mounted by a group of Chinese dissidents in exile, and it has won the support of labor and human rights organizations and people from all over the world. It calls on the Chinese government to free those still imprisoned as a result of the 1989 crackdown and all other "prisoners of conscience" and to extend, to all Chinese citizens, basic human rights, including freedom of expression, freedom of association, and freedom of religion.

We don't have a crystal ball that will reveal the future of democracy in China or the fate of the hundreds of thousands of Kosovars—or what will happen in any of the crises that will threaten human freedom and dignity tomorrow. But concern for human rights has been a precious and reliable compass for us in the past, and we must continue to make it our guide. ▮

***Where We Stand* is published once every month in *The New Republic*. To comment, write to Sandra Feldman, AFT, 555 New Jersey Ave. N.W., Washington, DC 20001.** **© Sandra Feldman 1999.** **Visit our web site (http://www.aft.org).**

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Sympathy for the Demon

WE JOIN WITH ALL Americans in celebrating the release of three American soldiers who had been seized by Slobodan Milosevic's forces on the Yugoslavia–Macedonia border more than a month ago. For them and their families, this is a time of real joy and relief. For the United States and its stumbling war effort in the Balkans, however, this is a moment of danger. The Butcher of the Balkans and the American peace lobby have found each other.

It was, of course, Jesse Jackson who brokered the soldiers' release during a visit to Belgrade. Jackson has seldom heard of an American cause in the world he could support, especially if it involves using force; and no anti-American dictator has ever been beyond his pale. Yet, even for a man who has carried out similar stunts in such locales as Damascus and Havana, the trip to Belgrade, headquarters of the most horrific campaign of slaughter in Europe since World War II, was a grotesque undertaking.

During his entire stay, or even after it, he spent hardly a moment addressing the killing, looting, and rape of ethnic Albanians by Serb forces in Kosovo (except to call it, delicately, a "purge"). Jackson dwelled instead on the plight of the civilians of Serbia who have been hit by errant NATO bombs. He even suggested that he was risking his own life by going to a city that America and its allies were bombing; though all the bombing goes on at night, and Jackson was safely ensconced after dark each evening in the Belgrade Hyatt hotel, a manifestly civilian building that NATO has ruled out as a target. As a final appalling flourish, Jackson seized one of Milosevic's bloodstained hands and invited him to join in a prayer circle.

Jackson insisted his venture was a "moral appeal" to Milosevic. But, as Jackson described it on "Larry King Live," this "appeal" sounded more like a business transaction: "I felt if we could make the contact and make the appeal, based on enlightened interests—for example, I said to Mr. Milosevic, 'Do you want to keep these three soldiers here as war trophies and attract even more reaction of their presence here? They are no currency to you locked up in jail. Or do you want to release them and invest them and make a diplomatic gesture?'" (No word on the soldiers' reactions to being spoken and thought of in these terms.) Milosevic calculated the costs and benefits and quickly concluded that three released POWs would be a small price to pay in exchange for the respectability Jackson could buy his cause on American TV. It was a no-brainer, really.

Jackson does these things and talks this way because he couldn't recognize radical evil if it walked right up and, well, grabbed him by the hand. Over the past few days, he has repeatedly articulated the view that the Balkan bloodbath is just a big misunderstanding (without face-to-face talks, the two sides are "kissing through a telephone," Jackson observed), a morally unintelligible battle between two equally legitimate, or illegitimate, combatants. "We demonize Milosevic," he said upon his return. "They demonize President Clinton. The cycle of demonization has to stop." Or, as Rabbi Steven Bennet Jacobs, who accompanied Jackson and a gaggle of other leftish clergy members to Belgrade, put it: "Jesse has that unique ability to not be judgmental."

Well, special, perhaps, but not unique. Alas, the new peace lobby is a bipartisan coalition. Along with the vast majority of the American press, Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott rushed to congratulate Jackson on his "accomplishment" in Belgrade and to endorse his call for a negotiated settlement. The man from Mississippi said, "As Jesse Jackson would say, 'Give peace a chance.'" Whereas the Jackson wing of the peace lobby stands for the proposition that nothing is worth fighting for, the Republican wing stands for the proposition that nothing is worth fighting for as long as Bill Clinton is president and commander-in-chief.

While Jackson has been making mischief in Belgrade, House Whip Tom DeLay has been making mischief over the issues of ground troops and funding for the military campaign. He says that, unlike in the Gulf war, where America was led by George Bush, a president we could trust, "we [now] have a president I don't trust, who has proven my reason for not trusting him. He had no plan. We have a civil war that was falsely described as a huge humanitarian problem, when, in comparison to other places, it was nothing." Having suggested that he distrusts Bill Clinton so much that he believes Slobodan Milosevic's far uglier lies, DeLay actually complained that this is a war for "altruism, not patriotism."

Confronted with the obstructionists of the left and the right, the Clinton administration seems paralyzed. We are assured that national security adviser Sandy Berger pleaded with Jackson not to go to Belgrade, but the White House was

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plainly unwilling to use its power to force him to stay at home. And, when his trip was over, he was invited for a cordial sit-down at the White House—where he had previously been seen counseling Chelsea Clinton to bear up under the strain of the Lewinsky scandal. Long after the condescending proposition that Jackson controls the votes of black America ceased to be necessarily true, the Democratic Party's leaders still can't quite bring themselves to resist even his most dubious foreign policy ventures, for fear of what might happen in the next election.

As for the Republicans, the administration deludes itself if it thinks that they can be appeased any more easily than Jackson can. They (or at least some of them—Senator John McCain, who sponsored a bill that would have allowed Clinton to use "all necessary force" in Kosovo, is an honorable exception) are determined to milk the "Clinton-Gore war" for all the political advantage they can. Fact is, they hope it fails.

AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

It's easier with your eyes closed.

The president has already cracked, if just a bit, under the pressure, suggesting that he might stop the war in exchange for Milosevic's *beginning* to withdraw his troops. (The administration rushed to knock that idea down almost as soon as the president had floated it.) He must realize, or be made to realize, that the only antidote to the crosscutting domestic politics of this war is a clear plan of action. The president wants to stop ethnic cleansing; he wants to avoid all American casualties and Serb civilian casualties; he wants to keep NATO together; he wants to avoid offending the Russians; he wants the whole thing wrapped up before the New Hampshire primary. Sooner or later he is going to have to decide which of these objectives is most important and recognize that it can probably be pursued only at the expense of the others. Otherwise, sooner or later it will be too late. ■

NOTEBOOK

SELF-IMPORTANCE: And, while we're on the subject of Jesse Jackson, let's not forget his de facto travel agent: Democratic Representative Rod Blagojevich of Illinois. The heretofore unknown second-term Serbian-American congressman from the North Side of Chicago used his Belgrade connections to grease the skids for Jackson's trip. And, like Jackson, he came back from Serbia urging the White House to take a more understanding view of Slobodan Milosevic's predicament. He also came back giddy about all of the attention. "It's thrilling to be in the mix," he told a *Washington Post* reporter dispatched to Blagojevich's office to interview the congressman for the obligatory "Style" profile. "It sure beats digging a ditch for a living." As for the notion that a member of the House of Representatives shouldn't have taken part in such a mission? "If Mother Teresa had been one of those prisoners, and we had gotten her out, we would have been criticized," Blagojevich mused. "I guess if you're not being criticized, you're not important." And, as we all know, the important thing is to be important.

TED'S EXCELLENT ADVENTURE: The press has been in a swoon over billionaire corporate financier Ted Forstmann for his Children's Scholarship Fund, the program that gives low-income children stipends to help pay for private school tuition. And, while most accounts have dutifully revealed Forstmann's political history—namely, that he is a vocal critic of public schools—they usually balance that fact by citing the bipartisan support for his cause. It is, of course, true that the fund's board of advisers includes such luminaries as Colin Powell, George Shultz, Henry Kissinger, and Michael Ovitz. What nobody mentions is that these men have profited abundantly from their work on behalf of the Gulfstream Aerospace Company, which Forstmann's holding company owns. As Thomas Toch reported in these pages (see "Flying High," December 21, 1998), they have been trading on their prestige and connections to get Gulfstream lucrative contracts; in return, Forstmann has given them sweetheart stock options worth, in some cases, more than $1 million. But, hey, the kids are the real winners.

RYAN TO THE RESCUE: Those still struggling to understand the Littleton murders need struggle no more: Tom Clancy has weighed in. On the opinion page of the April 27 *Los Angeles Times*, the author of *The Hunt for Red October* laments that people are "taking this incident and using it as fodder for their own political views." Clancy then takes the incident and uses it as fodder for his political views—namely, that we need prayer in school. As evidence, he cites his own boyhood at Catholic school: "Nobody shot up St. Matthew Elementary School while I was there—and back then gun-control laws were far more lax than they are now. Crime was also a far more rare event." Perhaps, but it seems Clancy's later education didn't include a class on the fallacies of solipsism. ■

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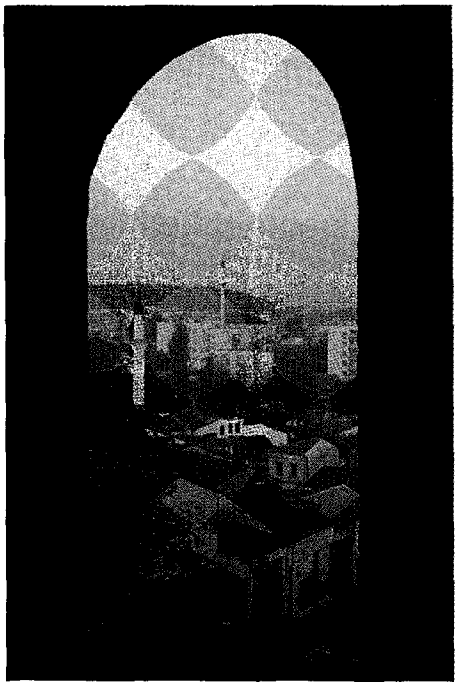
Macedonia Dispatch

The Exiled

By Anna Husarska

Western leaders have kept their promises regarding Kosovo. They have not allowed "another Bosnia" to happen. This war has set its own original standards of barbarism. Whatever lessons the West has learned from Bosnia, Slobodan Milosevic has learned one, too: he need not wage a conventional war; he can damage many lives and destabilize the entire region by triggering a mass exodus of ethnic Albanians from Kosovo.

If, as part of this process, Macedonia has turned into Pristina-in-exile, it is largely for geographical reasons. A quick glance at the map explains why the town of Pec went to Montenegro, why the people of Prizren are being transplanted to Albania at rates as high as 10,000 a day, and why the citizens of Pristina resettled in Macedonia.



But, in the case of Pristina, there are other, non-geographic ties as well. Back when the portrait of Marshal Tito hung in schools and kitchens from Ljubljana to Dubrovnik, Macedonia's Albanians felt closer to Kosovo's Albanians than they did to the Albanians in the autarkic, tightly closed, and underdeveloped neighboring Albania. Many of Macedonia's Albanians studied in the Kosovo capital of Pristina, further solidifying their bonds with the educated elites there. In fact, after Macedonia became independent, it required no visas from Yugoslav citizens, and, working in the region over the past three years, I often ran into my Pristina friends on day trips to the cafés of Macedonia's capital, Skopje.

So, when last month I found *le tout* Pristina distributed among three cafés in Macedonia, at first I considered it normal, even reassuring. But mixed with the joy of seeing those people alive was my unease about their situation. Most of the Kosovo refugees have been directed by the Macedonian authorities to muddy, overcrowded camps. But many Pristina literati—journalists, writers, filmmakers—were able to use their old connections to settle with friends or family in Skopje or the predominantly Albanian towns of Tetovo, Gostivar, Debar, and Struga. Many of these "deportees"—they prefer that term to "refugee"—are now attempting to reconstitute a civil-society-in-exile, both to help restore some semblance of normality to the exiled community and to present the outside world with a more coherent voice for the Kosovo Albanians than the inchoate cries of suffering being broadcast by the media.

Other deportees are simply struggling to reconstitute their own lives. Take Fadil Bajraj, an aging beatnik and employee of the Soros Foundation in Pristina, who has translated many works of Ginsberg and Kerouac into Albanian. I spotted Fadil in the Bolero, an alternative café in Tetovo. It was impossible to miss him with his long beard, gray locks, fashionable small glasses, and fingers stained yellow from chain-smoking. He had his Bob Dylan button proudly displayed on the lapel of his sleeveless vest.

"Fadil, how did you get here?" I asked stupidly, to cover my emotion upon seeing alive this man with whom I had often had screaming matches over politics. "Rail carriage, then *Rambouilletplatz*," he said, meaning that he went through the Blace no-man's-land camp on the border. I found talking to Fadil difficult: first, because I felt embarrassed to disagree with him as usual while he was in such a precarious situation (this time Fadil thought that the pacifist Ibrahim Rugova was a wise leader, whereas I have always considered Rugova a disaster for Kosovo); second, because Fadil's alienation had been rendered so complete—he was now an outcast in an outcast nation. And he knew it.

A few blocks away, in the Arbi restaurant on Avenue Tito, the more mainstream outcasts were holding court. At nearly half of the tables, somebody was conducting an interview, either in person or over one of the ubiquitous mobile phones. These days among the exiled Pristinians, those phones are the tools of power. They mean access to the other world.

Naturally, Shkelzen Maliqi has a mobile. Shkelzen is a politically moderate writer. This perhaps explains why he appeared so shell-shocked: moderation is an awkward stance to maintain in the midst of an apocalypse. As we were discussing what media would provide the best connective tissue for a civil-society-in-exile, Shkelzen—the eternal dreamer—suggested an online monthly about art and culture!

The exiled journalists from the Pristina daily *Koha Ditore*—also patrons of Arbi—have adopted a more practical approach. On April 23, one month after being closed down in Kosovo, the paper began printing in Germany. The Macedonian government—elected only five months ago and facing one of the most unprecedented refugee crises of modern history—was at first wary of allowing *Koha Ditore* to operate in Macedonia. But it eventually gave permission, and three days later a reported 10,000 copies of the paper were distributed throughout the area refugee camps. The appearance of Pristina's famous daily has proved a morale boost to the refugees—showing them that at least one institution from their devastated homeland has survived.

The day after its relaunching, I went to see *Koha Ditore*'s editor Baton Haxhiu at the paper's tiny Tetovo editorial office. Baton showed me the paper's front page. It had a photo of some mobilization papers on KLA letterhead. That

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struck me as a bit careless, considering that a week earlier a big cache of KLA weapons had been discovered in Macedonia. Macedonians are already nervous that the influx of ethnic Albanians has dangerously tipped the balance between ethnic groups in their country—originally 67 percent Macedonian and 23 percent ethnic Albanian. And they are concerned that Serbia may retaliate against Macedonia if it believes the KLA (or anybody else, for that matter) is using it as a staging ground. But Baton insisted that Kosovo's Albanians have no intention of destabilizing Macedonia. "I understand and agree, but we are on the top of a powder keg," I countered. He pooh-poohed my worries and gave me a condescending hug.

At the Dal-met-fu café, I met Aferdita Kelmendi, director of Radio 21, an Internet broadcasting network from Pristina. Aferdita had just returned from a trip to the United States, where she had testified before Congress. At the airport she discovered to her surprise that the Macedonian authorities now ask for a special entry permit ("not a visa," they say) from Yugoslav passport holders. At another table, I shared this information with Blerim Shala, the editor of the Pristina weekly *Zeri*, a Rambouillet negotiator, and a longtime friend of mine. This was bad news for Blerim, who was about to go to the United States on a fund- and consciousness-raising trip. But Blerim had an even more mundane problem: no free pages left in his Yugoslav passport. I helped him write a request for financial support for his magazine. We optimistically listed his deputy, Bardh Hamzaj, on the form, even though he had not yet made it out of Kosovo. (Hamzaj eventually "came out" a week later.)

After Blerim left Dal-met-fu, I heard some noise and music coming from outside, so I walked out right into Skopje's main square. A podium had been erected in the center, draped by a few Yugoslav flags. It started to rain, and angry-looking Macedonians and Serbs began appearing everywhere, the men toting flags and wearing traditional Serbian—or "Chetnik"—hats. I called a Serb friend on my mobile phone and asked him to join me. A few older women from the anti-NATO crowd gave me hostile looks on hearing me speak English. I switched to Serbian and got friendly glances and an offer of a cigarette from a Chetnik wearing a "target" pin.

By the time my friend arrived, the crowd was belting out songs in Serbian. My friend bought the Belgrade pro-Milosevic daily *Politika*, tucked it in his pocket, and, thus protected, we made our way through the throng. It was a classic anti-NATO demonstration, complete with the symbolic dropping of a coffin labeled "NATO" into the Vardar River, a funeral march, and banners denouncing "Adolf Clinton" and promising that "NATO, you will die in Yugoslavia." The display was remarkable only because it was being staged in a country that is housing 15,000 NATO troops, more than any other non-NATO member ever has.

The Pristina exiles may succeed in rebuilding some measure of civil society for themselves. But it is clear that relations with their non-Albanian hosts will never be entirely civil. ■

San Francisco Dispatch

On the Waterfront

By Michael J. Ybarra

In 1938, Harry Bridges, the Australian-born leader of the West Coast longshoremen's union who was facing deportation from the United States for being a Communist, took the stage at a high school near Los Angeles to give a speech. An American Legionnaire snatched the microphone from Bridges and commanded the audience to follow him in the Pledge of Allegiance—but got lost six words into the oath. Bridges grabbed the mike back and picked up where the veteran left off. "When I say that pledge," Bridges told the Legionnaire, putting his hand over his heart, "it comes from here."

That's the Harry Bridges so many still revere today. Legendarily truculent and incorruptible, he paralyzed Pacific shipping and shut down West Coast ports during an 83-day strike he led in 1934. He created one of the most democratic unions in the country, the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU), made its members the best-paid dockworkers in the world, and helped to lift plantation laborers in Hawaii out of near feudal conditions. In 1977, when he retired from the union he'd led for 40 years, Bridges was making $27,000 a year—about half of what a dock foreman made. He had also weathered 20 years of federal prosecution over the allegation that he was a Communist—something he always denied, in the process becoming a hero to civil libertarians as well as to stevedores.

Now the port of San Francisco is set to honor its old nemesis. The San Francisco Port Commission is considering a proposal to name a plaza in front of the city's landmark Ferry Building after Bridges. The plaza, where Market Street ends at the Embarcadero at the edge of the bay, is located on the spot where, before Bridges brought the union hiring hall to the waterfront, men jostled to become human pack animals for 85 cents an hour. Since the idea has been endorsed by everyone from Mayor Willie Brown to Bridges's old negotiating antagonists in the shipping industry, there's every reason to think it will pass. "Not only was he an extraordinary labor leader, but he was also a vigorous champion of civil rights and world peace," Supervisor Sue Bierman wrote to Port Director Douglas Wong. "This is an important way to educate future generations about his many contributions."

The outpouring of sentiment is heartfelt and, in some ways, deserved. After all, tens of thousands of longshoremen lived better thanks to him, and his court fights established important rights of due process and free speech. But there is

Michael J. Ybarra is writing a book on Senator Pat McCarran, anti-communism, and McCarthyism.

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How to Buy a **PublicAffairs** Spring Book

(or any good book, for that matter)

The book business is changing...and it's changing in good ways for people with interests beyond the bestsellers-of-the-moment. Good books like the ones PublicAffairs is publishing this spring sometimes used to be hard to find. But now there are a lot of ways to get the book you want:

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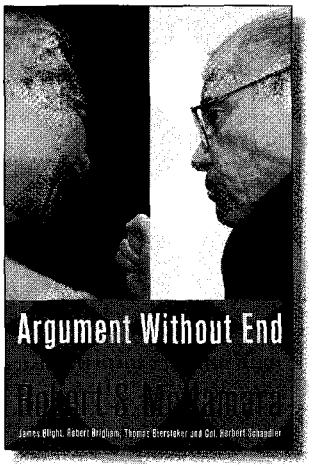

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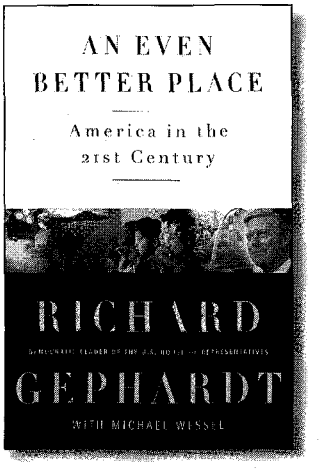
—Frances FitzGerald, author of *Fire in the Lake*



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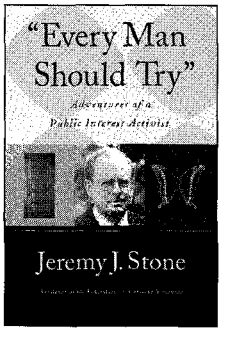

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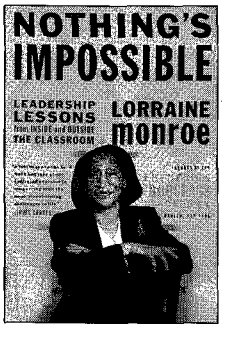

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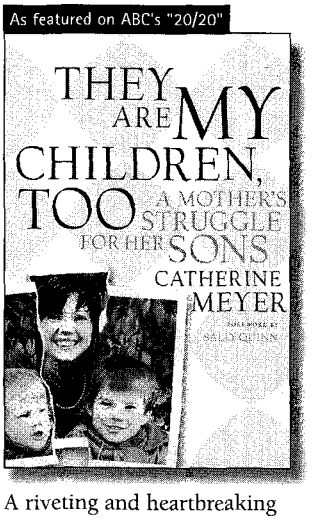

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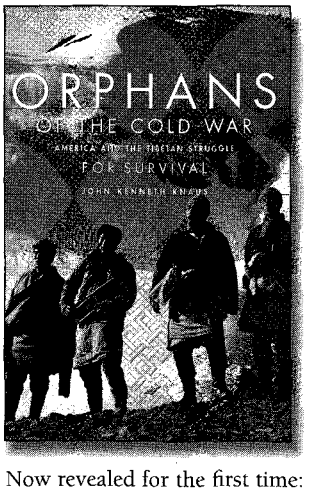

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one fact about Harry Bridges that his memorializers aren't about to acknowledge, because it's the one thing Bridges himself concealed all of those years—the fact that he was, indeed, a major figure in the American Communist Party.

Bridges's fight with the government dates back to 1939, when the INS forwarded to Labor Secretary Frances Perkins information about Bridges's suspected Communist ties. (At the time, the INS was part of the Labor Department.) To avoid the appearance that the government was out to get a militant labor leader, Perkins appointed Harvard Law School Dean James Landis to lead a federal inquiry into whether Bridges was a Communist. It lasted almost ten weeks, involved 62 witnesses, and filled 7,724 pages of transcript. One witness recalled seeing Bridges pay his party dues in 1935; an ex-Communist named John Leech claimed that it was common knowledge that Bridges was a party member and that his party name was Rossi. Another witness said he had heard Communist leader Earl Browder say that Bridges was one of the hardest men to handle in the party. The case had problems, though—the defense tried to paint Leech as a welfare cheat who contradicted himself, and the witness who'd seen Bridges paying his dues admitted to lying about other matters during the course of the trial. Ultimately, after Bridges swore under oath that he had never joined the party, Landis cleared him.

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A Bridges too far.

In 1941, the government tried again, prosecuting Bridges for violating the Smith Act, which allowed for the deportation of former Communists. This time, the witnesses included Harry Lundeberg—an open enemy of Bridges—who'd testified that Communist Sam Darcy had tried to recruit him into the party at Bridges's house. "I told him I wasn't interested," Lundeberg said, "and Bridges says, 'You don't have to worry, because I am one, too.'" This time, a judge found for the government.

But the victory was fleeting, for the Supreme Court overturned the conviction four years later. "The record in this case will stand forever as a monument to man's intolerance of man," Justice Frank Murphy wrote. "Seldom if ever in the history of this nation has there been such a concentrated and relentless crusade to deport an individual because he dared to exercise the freedom that belongs to him as a human being and that is guaranteed by the Constitution." Three months later, Bridges became a naturalized citizen, despite a last-minute affidavit by Bridges's ex-wife claiming that he had been a Communist. Once again, Bridges swore he was not and never had been a Communist. "You will make a fine citizen," Judge Thomas Foley told him.

Government prosecutors didn't give up, and in 1949 they charged Bridges with perjury for false statements he'd given at his citizenship hearing. Two witnesses testified that they had been at the party's 1936 convention when it was announced that Bridges was elected to the national committee. His ex-wife swore she had seen his party card.

Once again, Bridges lost in court; once again, the Supreme Court overturned the conviction. And, while the IRS later ruled that contributions to Bridges's legal defense fund were taxable income and made him pay up, that was the extent of his punishment—save for 20 days he'd spent in jail in the interim. The United States tried to annul Bridges's citizenship but failed at that, too.

In 1950, the Congress of Industrial Organizations ejected the ILWU for being dominated by Communists. But the union was strong enough to survive, and Bridges soldiered on as its leader. In 1970, this labor movement elder statesman was even appointed to the San Francisco Port Commission. He retired in 1977 and died in 1990.

It was not until after his death that the true extent of Bridges's Communist involvement became known. In 1992, historians Harvey Klehr and John E. Haynes disclosed that they'd found Bridges's name on a list of the American party leaders in the Moscow archives of the Comintern. The list, dated January 1938, refers to a member of the American Central Committee called "Rossi," and an accompanying biography names Rossi as Bridges. (The historians have promised to reprint the documents in a forthcoming volume of the Yale University Press series *Annals of Communism*.)

It's true that Bridges never hid his beliefs, only his party membership. Still, he never owned up to these political affiliations and accepted the consequences. And Bridges's beliefs were hardly admirable: he initially opposed Roosevelt's "imperialist" war girdings; then, when the Nazis invaded Russia, Bridges promptly switched sides and became ardently anti-fascist. After the war, Bridges opposed the Marshall Plan and other plots to thwart the Soviet Union. As his son said in an oral history not long ago: "He was pretty blind to problems in the Soviet Union. I remember when he went to Romania, he had a few complaints about his treatment, but all in all he had nothing but praise for the system."

To be sure, Bridges's cases established some important

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legal principles. Bridges's prosecutors were right, but, like Ken Starr, they had lost their sense of perspective. If there's a lesson from Bridges's 20-year trip through the legal system, it's that laws against seditious advocacy are virtually impossible to enforce fairly (a position the Supreme Court belatedly staked out in the late '50s). The American Communist Party was the hireling of a foreign enemy power, but, until its agents (including Bridges) actually committed crimes, the party should have been tolerated—if closely watched.

Yet one can recognize this fact without whitewashing Bridges's history—and, certainly, that's what San Francisco seems to be doing. We now know that one of the country's most militant labor leaders was a lifelong supporter of a state that enslaved more laborers than any other this century; the champion of the dockworkers was an apologist for the Gulag. The longshoremen's union building today is named in honor of Harry Bridges. That should be enough. ■

For some shady brokers, once is not enough.

Insecurities

By JIM ZARROLI

THE STRATTON OAKMONT securities firm did a brisk business during its seven-year existence. From a crammed trading room in a Long Island office park, its brokers would randomly place more than a million calls a month, cajoling anyone who answered the phone to buy stock. "Don't hang up the phone," new brokers were instructed, "till they buy or die."

For those who bought, the firm would initially put them in blue-chip stocks, as a sort of confidence-building gesture. Then, once trust was established and customers had forked over more money, brokers would move them into riskier, so-called "microcap" investments—smaller companies with unfamiliar names that tend to be traded in the more lightly regulated corners of the industry. But what the brokers would fail to mention was that Stratton—or its front men—often owned large positions in these microcap stocks.

By selling the stocks to its customers, the firm would drive up the stocks' share prices; then the firm would dump the shares it held and take huge profits—all at its customers' expense. After Stratton had bilked its customers of millions of dollars, regulators eventually caught on to Stratton's scam and shut down the firm in December 1996. Stratton's president and head trader were later barred from the securities industry.

Nevertheless, the Stratton way of business lives on. Some of those brokers who got their start at the firm have gone on to found their own operations—where they have replicated many of Stratton's worst practices. One firm started by a Stratton alum, Biltmore Securities of Fort Lauderdale, Florida, was expelled from the securities industry and was ordered to pay $7.1 million in fines and restitution by the National Association of Securities Dealers (NASD), which charged the company with stock manipulation and fraud. (The firm agreed to the fine without admitting wrongdoing.) Another firm with Stratton ties, Monroe Parker of Purchase, New York, was accused by the New York attorney general's office of bilking some 8,000 investors out of more than $100 million between 1994 and 1997. The firm's two owners and ten of its employees were indicted last October by a New York grand jury. And, last September, the NASD accused eight former Stratton brokers of unauthorized trading and other sales abuses while they worked at the now-defunct Mineola, New York, firm of Kensington Wells.

THE STRATTON STORY is hardly unique. The market for thinly capitalized microcap stocks is plagued by fraud—and much of it by repeat offenders. Like drug dealers scattering to new corners after a police crackdown, brokers whose firms are shut down by regulators have little trouble setting up shop at other firms. "They change jobs the way a lot of us change oil filters in our cars," complains Marc Beauchamp, spokesman for the North American Securities Administrators Association. Even worse, these shady brokers often maintain business ties with their former partners in crime, assisting in one another's schemes as they move around the securities industry—a sort of Bad Old Boys' network.

Why can't regulators prevent this? Part of the problem is lack of manpower. States, which license brokers, have the authority to suspend or bar brokers for cheating customers. But, with some 600,000 licensed brokers in the United States, most states are vastly understaffed—some have only three or four securities regulators. It also doesn't help that the nationwide computerized databank state regulators rely on to monitor brokers' records is clunky and not user-friendly. Indeed, about the only time dishonest brokers come under state scrutiny—and therefore run the risk of being put out of business—is when they need to reapply for a license. That means crooked brokers can operate unnoticed for years, shrugging off fines as business costs.

Nor is there much risk corrupt brokers will face criminal charges. With some notable exceptions, such as the New York attorney general's office, law enforcement officials have never made securities fraud a priority. A major reason for this is that stock fraud cases are hard to win; jurors are frequently unsympathetic to people who let themselves be taken advantage of by dishonest brokers. "White-collar crime just doesn't get the criminal punishment," says Joseph Borg, director of the Alabama Securities Commission. "A guy who mugs an old lady on the street and steals ten dollars is going to get a lot more time than a guy who steals ten thousand dollars from her and does it with a computer."

As a result, securities regulators have to pick their battles carefully, and lots of cases fall through the cracks. While the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) received more

JIM ZARROLI covers business for National Public Radio.

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than 9,000 investor complaints about brokers in 1997, most of them alleging unauthorized trading, the commission launched just 489 enforcement actions, and those involved all types of investment fraud. It's just as bad at the state level. "We have many more cases than we are finally able to close," laments one top state official. "It's a very depressing aspect of the job."

More depressing is the fact that, even when the system works, it can still fail. Consider the case of Cara Marks, a 43-year-old single mother from California who invested her family's savings with a New York broker she met through a business acquaintance. The broker, says Marks's lawyer Philip Aidikoff, proceeded to put her money into risky stocks, often acting without her permission and with little regard for her overall investment goals. The NASD arbitration panel, which hears investor complaints, awarded Marks $137,000 after hearing her claims. But, according to Aidikoff, the broker has yet to pay any of the award.

Regulators acknowledge repeat offenders are a problem. "Clearly it's an issue, and it's something we and the other regulators pay attention to," says Barry Goldsmith, the NASD's executive vice president for enforcement. As the parent company of the NASDAQ stock exchange, which operates the Over-the-Counter Bulletin Board, a microcap-stock-quotation service known as a breeding ground for fraud, the NASD has sought to tighten control over brokers. For instance, it has a new rule requiring firms to tape their phone calls if they hire a lot of brokers from firms with long records. It has also beefed up its enforcement staff.

BUT, WHILE THESE measures have helped, they don't get at a larger problem: as a self-regulated industry organization, the NASD may be too closely tied to large trading firms to be an effective watchdog. To be sure, firms would undoubtedly like to rid the industry of bad brokers and the embarrassing publicity they generate, but they sometimes fight proposed reforms that might interfere with their own quest for profits. For instance, the industry has sometimes balked at efforts to restrict the kinds of cold-calling that can be made by unregistered brokerage firm employees.

Consequently, any real effort to crack down on repeat offenders will probably have to come from the SEC. It, too, has made some progress against repeat offenders, in part by working with state and federal prosecutors and helping them pursue more fraud cases. The U.S. attorney's office in New York, for one, has sharply increased the number of criminal prosecutions it brings each year. But, like the states, the SEC is greatly outnumbered by the criminals. "If we had twice the staff," says Richard Walker, SEC director of enforcement, "we could bring more cases."

One idea that would stretch resources further would be to allow the agency to use evidence gathered by the states to bring cases against brokerage firms. Right now, according to Walker, SEC officials looking into a firm often find themselves retracing the steps of state investigators. Another good move would be redesigning the NASD's hard-to-use Central Registration Depository, the huge databank where broker records are stored. Under the current system, state officials have no way of knowing when complaints come in about a broker, unless they individually search each record. The NASD says an overhaul of the system is pending, but the old one is still in place.

Still, these are only half-measures. The only surefire way to stop repeat offenders is to substantially bulk up the regulatory regime. As Mark Maddox, president of the Public Investors Arbitration Bar Association, says, "Until the people who are making budgeting decisions at the national level, and at the state and NASD levels, decide that white-collar crime is worth devoting resources to, I don't think the problem is really solvable."

One complicating factor is the ever-changing nature of microcap-stock fraud. In the years since Stratton's heyday, the Internet has made it possible to reach millions of investors faster than ever before. That has fundamentally transformed the nature of fraud, making big operations like Stratton obsolete. Dishonest brokers no longer need to hire large staffs to find customers. They don't even need to be in the United States. And that makes finding them more difficult. In the long run, dishonest brokers never really disappear; they just change strategies. And regulators hoping to catch them have to be ready to change as well. ■

Those pesky term limits.

Bringing Down The House

By RYAN LIZZA

IN 1994, WHEN the Republicans teamed up with Paul Jacob, pied piper of the term-limits movement, they knew how stubborn he could be—or, at least, they should have known. In 1981, as the 21-year-old chairman of the Arkansas Libertarian Party, Jacob became one of the first Americans to be indicted for resisting the reinstated draft registration, then hid from the FBI for two years. When the feds finally arrested him and sent him to prison for six months, Jacob was openly defiant. "What this time in jail has shown me," he said in a recorded message from prison that was played at a Libertarian conference in 1985, "is that an individual has the power to stand up to [our] massive government and to not only endure but also to prevail."

Now, the Republicans are finding that Jacob can be just as obstinate toward his allies. Protecting a very vulnerable six-seat majority in the House of Representatives, the GOP would like some of its three-term members to stick around, and many seem inclined to oblige. But Jacob, as national director of U.S. Term Limits (USTL), isn't about to let them off the hook. Indeed, he's prepared to unleash $20 million in negative advertising on the GOP's term-limits apostates, declared and prospective. "Bob Novak said to me once, 'You know, I think you're the most hated person in Washington,'"

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Jacob says with a smile. "That's fine. That's good."

Surely it says something about the man's mettle that he remains so unwavering in his ideological devotion. More important, though, it says something about the Republican Party—and how the passions that ignited its 1994 revolution are now poised to engulf it.

In 1994, REPUBLICANS put term limits in the Contract with America; the term-limits lobby (USTL and its affiliate, Americans for Limited Terms), spent more than $1 million in advertising to help Republicans defeat anti-term-limit Democrats. The day after the election, USTL issued a press release titled "TERM LIMITS HELP GOP SWEEP." "Term limits activists across the country are cheering the role the issue played in the Republican Party's takeover of both houses of Congress," it read, noting that Democrats had been driven "over a cliff." Soon, Jacob was working with Newt Gingrich's close confidant, anti-tax activist Grover Norquist, and organizations like the Christian Coalition and Citizens Against Government Waste, to push for a term-limits amendment to the Constitution.

But it wasn't long before the alliance broke down. From the very beginning of their campaign, Jacob and USTL insisted that anything but a six-year limit for House members was unacceptable. "It was a jihad mentality," says Cleta Mitchell, a former USTL board member who had a falling out with the group in 1993. There was "this whole rabid zeal for six years as being magic. That was more important to them than anything else." Within months of the 1994 election, USTL launched a blistering campaign against Republicans, attacking them for selling out with a "phony" amendment.

Hardest hit was Bill McCollum of Florida, the leading advocate of twelve-year limits in the House. In March 1995, USTL blitzed both Washington and McCollum's Orlando district with ads accusing him of trying to overturn Florida's term-limits law, which called for eight-year limits. McCollum was incensed. After a heated interview at NPR's Washington studio a few days after the ads ran, Jacob and McCollum came nose to nose in a shouting match as McCollum poked his finger into Jacob's chest. A person who was there remembers Bob Edwards, the host of "Morning Edition," deftly placing himself between the two men to keep them apart.

Within a week, Newt Gingrich attacked USTL as "cannibals," and the group was banished, for a time, from all term-limits strategy sessions. By the end of the month, the term-limits amendment, the final piece of the Contract with America, had fallen 63 votes short of the needed two-thirds majority.

Republicans brought up term limits for another vote in 1997, but, again, USTL impeded progress. Cleta Mitchell tells a story of a meeting between term-limits lobbyists and congressional leaders. Some members began quizzing Jacob about a term-limits website featuring a picture of a devilish Newt Gingrich sprouting horns. Jacob told the congressmen it was not a USTL site. "At the end of the meeting, somebody asked him, 'How would we find you on the Web?'" says Mitchell. "And Jacob gives the Web address for the same website. This is in the span of the same meeting." McCollum also came in for some more abuse. This time, the ads attacking him morphed his face into Fidel Castro's, while the narrator intoned: "Abuse of power that's downright dictatorial. It's Bill McCollum's record." The amendment failed by an even wider margin than in 1995. "If I wanted to develop a strategy to blow up term limits, this would have been it," Representative Dick Armey of Texas quipped at the time. "I think they basically destroyed the movement," says Mitchell. "I guess they're either evil or stupid. I don't know which ... maybe a combination."

After the term-limits amendment died a second time in Congress, USTL adopted its current strategy of negative-advertising pressure to enforce term-limits pledges. "[By] 2002, we will get to about one hundred twenty-five members of the House who will have forsworn a career and who are not controllable by the leadership or special interests," Jacob predicts. "That is a wide-open bloc within Congress that will be good on reform issues, that will live up to its campaign promises. That's the revolution that people were looking for in '94—instead they got Newt Gingrich."

The math for the GOP, of course, is simple. They hold a six-vote majority, and six Republicans—including rising star Matt Salmon of Arizona and impeachment Manager Charles Canady of Florida—are sticking by their pledge to step down. Little wonder, then, that the National Republican Campaign Committee has been quietly encouraging Republicans to break their pledges, and the Christian Coalition wrote USTL last year advising the group that "we do not consider yours a responsible, effective, or rational approach."

USTL, however, is making no secret of its plan to target those who renege. For those on the fence—like Tillie Fowler of Florida, the fifth-ranking House Republican and the highest-ranking woman in the House—the example of George Nethercutt has to be disturbing. In 1994, Nethercutt became the poster child for term limits when he rode the issue—and more than $300,000 in pro-term-limits advertising—to an upset win over House Speaker Tom Foley. Nethercutt has now backtracked on his promise to step down next year; he says he'll make a final decision this spring. In response, USTL has rented a billboard in Nethercutt's eastern Washington district that mocks, "CONGRESSMAN GEORGE NETHERCUTT—THANKS FOR KEEPING YOUR WORD!" USTL followed that with TV commercials tying a flip-flop on term limits to Watergate and the Clinton sex scandal.

In May, USTL launched a new commercial attacking Nethercutt on a local issue concerning dams on Washington's Lower Snake River. After his record on term limits, USTL asks, "Can we trust him on anything else?" The ad links Nethercutt's votes on huge appropriations bills to proposals by government agencies to remove the dams, which Nethercutt opposes. Nethercutt called the ad an absurd lie and successfully lobbied some state TV stations to stop playing it.

After five years of such USTL tactics, no Republican in Congress seriously considers pushing for term limits anymore. But whether or not he's responsible for destroying the movement, as many believe, Jacob is about to wreak havoc on those conservatives who rode term limits to power. "I'm not a masochist or anything," he says, "but, as long as this movement is hated inside of Washington, we're doing something right." By that standard, Jacob can't fail. ■

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Waiting for the Cox report.

Secrets And Lies

By JACOB HEILBRUNN

IN DECEMBER, THE CIA dispatched one of its officers to stand guard inside a windowless room in the Longworth House Office Building. Nearly six months later, the officer is still there. That's because the room's other occupant, the Cox committee report on Chinese espionage, remains a state secret. The 700-page report is the work of a bipartisan, select committee, chaired by Republican Representative Chris Cox of California. The committee had originally been formed to investigate allegations that two American firms, Loral Space and Communications and Hughes Electronics, had supplied sensitive rocket guidance technology to China, and that Clinton administration laxness in supervising technology transfers had contributed to the problem. But Cox and his colleagues, in the course of investigating the technology transfers, soon discovered other evidence that made it necessary to take on a bigger—and more controversial—job: examining Chinese spying in the United States itself. Before the committee's conclusions about Chinese espionage could be released, though, they had to be carefully vetted by the Clinton administration for security reasons. So carefully, in fact, that it's become increasingly hard to avoid the sense that the administration has ended up being more effective at stopping the Cox report from appearing than the extensive espionage it documents. And so, until the report is declassified, it sits in the room—along with the CIA officer.

ROB BABSONI

Most likely, this will change sometime during the week of May 10, when Cox expects a slightly sanitized version of his report to be cleared by the Clinton administration's national security apparatus—finally—for release. What will we find out when that happens? It's hard to say for certain, but, given what we know already from leaks, and despite the administration's pruning, the report's cumulative weight should make it a document of no small interest. The most volatile portions will probably revolve around Wen Ho Lee, the scientist at the Los Alamos National Laboratory suspected of helping the Chinese acquire advanced nuclear warhead technology. But there will be more than just Lee.

It appears also that the Cox committee report contains new information about China's exploitation of the Clinton administration's willingness to allow American companies to sell the Chinese dual-use technology. Starting in 1993, with the support of then-Secretary of Commerce Ron Brown, American firms began to promote the sale of computers and other high technology to China. The question is whether these firms were, in the process, also giving the Chinese dual-use technology—technology that arguably should be kept from the Chinese since, although it can be used for relatively benign purposes, it can also be used to achieve military ends. In particular, the Cox committee report apparently takes a close look at the sale of high-performance computers to China and whether these computers were used by the Chinese in modeling the miniaturized W-88 warhead.

But, whatever the Cox committee report concludes, one thing is certain: the White House will counter with a concerted spin campaign. In fact, it already has. The story of the report so far has become something of a case study in how the Clinton administration has attempted, again and again, to substitute damage control for substance in foreign policy. Consider the case of Jim Kennedy, spokesman for the White House counsel's office who did some of the heavy lifting during Bimbroglio. Now he's handling queries about the administration's performance on Chinese espionage. And he's falling back on tried and true tactics, even going so far as to compare the Lewinsky scandal to this one. By doing this, of course, he means to say that stories about Cox's findings are overblown, that there really is no scandal, and that investigative reporters are just cooking up something to investigate. To the White House, at least, scandals involving affairs of state are apparently no different from those involving the president's other kinds of affairs.

When allegations—presumably based on leaks from the Cox committee report—first surfaced in March that the Clinton administration had turned a blind eye toward information about Chinese espionage in American labs, the administration denied that it had ever been remiss. On March 14, for instance, national security adviser Sandy Berger went on NBC's "Meet the Press" to announce that the White House had responded "swiftly" to each charge of espionage brought to its attention. And, on March 19, President Clinton declared that "to the best of my knowledge, no one has said anything to me about any espionage which occurred by the Chinese against the labs during my presidency."

Unfortunately for the Clinton White House, such assertions were soon contradicted. On April 12, Notra Trulock, a senior Energy Department intelligence official, testified to the Senate Armed Services Committee that in July 1997—on the eve of Clinton's summit with Chinese President Jiang Zemin—he had alerted Sandy Berger to his suspicions of ongoing Chinese espionage in American labs. Trulock has said that he didn't get much of a response. Indeed, about the only thing Berger appeared to do "swiftly" in response to Trulock's allegations was to have his deputy, Gary Samore, commission an alternative study from the CIA about other ways—apart from stealing from the United States—the

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Chinese might have developed certain technologies. Not surprisingly, the CIA study was later used to cast doubt on Trulock's concerns.

Once Trulock's story became public, making it impossible for the administration to maintain that it had always been vigilant about Chinese espionage, the White House switched from denying the stories to calling them old news. "This is a problem dating back to the late seventies," said one official. Moreover, administration officials said, the Chinese may have made a few inroads, but this was already being dealt with—even before the Cox committee had started its investigation. Indeed, the committee, according to one administration official, is "preaching to the converted.... We were well out in front of the Cox committee." As evidence of this, officials point to Presidential Decision Directive 61, issued by Clinton in February 1998—four months before the Cox committee was formed—which ordered the Energy Department to tighten security at the labs.

But Trulock, in his congressional testimony, complained that Energy Department officials "strenuously resisted" implementing PDD-61. Then-Deputy Secretary of Energy Elizabeth Moler has maintained that Trulock's allegations are "absolutely false" and that the department did implement changes. Unfortunately, given the secrecy still surrounding the underlying events, this amounts to a high-level he-said-she-said dispute, and, at least until the Cox committee report is declassified—and maybe not even then—it's impossible to know exactly what occurred.

Of course, administration officials try to gloss over this uncertainty by offering reassurances about how promptly they've put into place some of the Cox committee's recommendations. CIA Director George Tenet has assembled a panel to produce a damage assessment, and the administration also is conducting an assessment of its science programs and contacts with foreign scientists. "The main story which nobody picks up," says an administration official, "is that the committee and administration are hardly in disagreement. Ninety to ninety-five percent, we're in agreement." But, if everything was fine before the Cox committee finished its report, then why is the administration now bothering to implement the committee's recommendations?

The final fallback position at the White House is to blame the whole affair on the media. While some Cox committee staffers say that White House spin doctors are preemptively leaking the committee's most explosive findings in order to steal the report's thunder before it's even released, it's hard to

Busted China

THE STORY OF China's economic miracle has become a media and political cliché. While the rest of Asia remains mired in regional recession, the Chinese last year boasted an audacious growth rate of nearly eight percent; and, while other Asian governments have allowed their currencies to plummet, China's leaders have steadfastly stood by theirs. This pleases economists, and it particularly pleases the Clinton administration, which touts a vast, booming China market as at least one reason for its policy of "engagement."

But what if this success story isn't exactly true? China's external sector (exports and foreign direct investment), which in 1997 was the main engine of economic expansion, has moved sharply into reverse. Export growth was flat in 1998 and fell by nearly eight percent in the first three months of this year. Foreign investment shrank by almost 15 percent. This year, for the first time in more than a decade, both overseas sales and inward investment look set to drop.

Here, on the ground, the picture is less heartening still. In central Shanxi province, the heart of China's coal-mining country, big state coal mines have not been paid by the bankrupt state enterprises they supply; in some cases, the coal mines cannot pay their workers' salaries and pensions.

In Taiyuan, the provincial capital, people laugh at the official estimate of 3.5 percent unemployment—and speculate that the actual rate is closer to 30 or even 40 percent. Protests outside provincial government buildings are a regular occurrence, as is violent crime—from highway robbery and armed burglary to kidnapping and murder. As one Taiyuan man told me, "Decent people don't go out after eleven p.m."

In the coastal city of Ningbo, exports have been falling by more than one percent a month since early last year. The local planning commission says a number of big foreign investments, such as the proposed construction of a South Korean-bankrolled shipyard, have been suspended. A bribery and fraud scandal swept away the top tier of the city's government. The city's flagship infrastructure project, a 1.5-mile long, $52 million bridge, has a crack in the middle, thanks to a design flaw, shoddy construction, and, allegedly, misappropriation of funds. Now, the government will have to dismantle the bridge and rebuild it.

Indeed, things have gotten so bad that even the Panglossian Chinese leadership has shown some candor. Premier Zhu Rongji recently made the most bleak state-of-the-nation address to the country's so-called parliament in years: "Demand in the market is feeble ... there is overcapacity in most industries ... financial discipline is lax ... economic order is somewhat in disarray ... the pressure of providing employment for people is fairly great ... and public order in some areas is not good"—not exactly what you hear from China's boosters in the West.

Unfortunately for the Chinese citizenry, the government does not seem to have the tools to fix the problem—or is unwilling to use them. Although the government is loosening consumer credit to revive flagging demand, Beijing has only limited funds. Last year, China's government spending program, in effect, enabled Beijing to buy a few extra percentage points in growth. It cannot keep doing that for long. Meanwhile, Beijing is pressing ahead with state-enterprise reform, which may be in the nation's long-term interests but will, at least in the short term, mean more layoffs, more insecurity, and less consumer confidence.

There is, of course, one other avenue for reviving growth: devaluing the currency. In 1997, Chinese exports grew by around 20 percent, buoying

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believe that White House officials are faking it when they express outrage over the spate of recent stories about Chinese espionage. In fact, Jim Kennedy, the White House spokesman, is so angry with recent Pulitzer recipient Jeff Gerth of *The New York Times* that he's willing to pick a public fight. Gerth's articles, Kennedy says, are riddled with "factual mistakes, and they're written with attitude and an edge.... This notion that we've been unresponsive is belied by the facts."

Specifically, Kennedy points to an April 8 *Times* article by Gerth and James Risen that alleged Berger had learned about the theft of neutron bomb data as early as April 1996. "Four people at the meeting don't recall Berger being told," says Kennedy. But Gerth stands by the story. When I explained to Gerth that the White House was now targeting him by name, he read to me portions of an April 20 letter he had sent to National Security Council spokesman David Leavy in response to White House complaints about the April 8 story. Gerth wrote: "[N]o one knows precisely what transpired because the meeting was apparently not transcribed. Our reporting relied on officials who were present or had used materials present at the briefing. Moreover, one of our sources spoke to us with the knowledge and approval of the White House. We did not include this in the story ... because we did not want to point a finger at the White House as disclosing a highly classified briefing."

The final assist to the White House campaign has come from the fact that Cox himself has also been a bit shy about pointing fingers, and this, in turn, has angered some of his Republican colleagues. At the least, they wanted the report to be released by the time of Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji's high-profile visit to the United States in April. "This is ludicrous, a month after Zhu Rongji's visit," fumes one conservative foreign policy operative. "Cox has repeatedly accepted statements by the administration, 'We'll give you a little if you wait a bit.'" It is more than a little ironic that, in previous Republican-led investigations of the Clinton administration and China, wild accusations were made without any evidence to back them up. Dan Burton and Fred Thompson, for instance, practically fingered Jiang as the 1996 Clinton-Gore campaign's finance chair. In this case, though, matters are reversed. Cox has the goods that Burton and Thompson lacked—he's just reluctant to use them. "If this turns into political bloodsport," Cox told me, "we won't solve the problem." Of course, you might say Cox's definition of the problem seems to be somewhat different from the one held by the Clinton administration. ■

confidence, easing the pain of state-enterprise reform, and inducing foreign direct investment. Last year, by contrast, overseas sales increased by just 0.3 percent, thanks in no small part to high currency values, which keep Chinese exports expensive. Confidence in the non-state sector has shrunk accordingly: investment by private and collective enterprises, which together accounted for 56 percent of industrial output in 1997, has collapsed. Falling consumer demand and industrial overcapacity, in turn, have driven down retail prices by roughly three percent.

Within the domestic market, a strong Chinese currency has also taken its toll on national enterprises. Some large shipyards in China have not won a single export order since the beginning of last year; even Chinese ship buyers are placing orders with cheaper ship makers from Japan or South Korea. South Korean steel producers off-loading cheaper steel into China have pushed down domestic prices by roughly 15 percent in some product areas, depressing earnings at China's largest steel mills.

Devaluation, of course, would not resolve everything. But it would remedy the pain felt at some of the most acute pressure points of the Chinese economy. Exporters would profit from a small boost in competitiveness; higher import costs would drive off some of the overseas competition and offer a dose of imported inflation to counter the deflationary trend. At least some foreign companies already expect devaluation; if the Chinese government finally takes the currency down, it would end the uncertainty and pave the way for a renewal of investment funds. Chinese individuals holding off on purchases in an uncertain economic environment and spiriting funds out of the country might return to more normal economic behavior.

Even a modest devaluation might do the trick, and, for that matter, it doesn't have to be called a "devaluation." The central bank could simply broaden the bands within which the currency is traded to allow for, say, a ten percent movement either up or down. This would allow the currency to depreciate but also, in time, appreciate. It would be in keeping with the central bank's commitment to currency stability, while moving gradually toward a fully convertible currency. And, given the problems pegged currencies have caused, Beijing could argue, quite rightly, that a stable exchange rate is not, ultimately, a fixed one.

Still, the Chinese government can find reasons aplenty not to adjust the exchange rate. A currency devaluation of more than ten percent could spur other emerging market economies to follow suit. While Asia is in better shape to handle a Chinese devaluation than it was a year ago—given the choice, Asian economies in the early stages of recovery might rather see strong, quality growth from China than an externally fixed exchange rate—there are still fears that a Chinese devaluation could spark another round of Asian and Latin American currency turmoil. That would cause fresh, possibly deeper pain and, perhaps, puncture U.S. confidence, too. Beijing would also have to consider the potential impact on the economy of Hong Kong. It's not written in stone that the territory's currency must depreciate if China devalues, but the downward pressure might well become irresistible.

Indeed, the bottom line is political. Not only would devaluation make life difficult for the United States and other pro-China governments abroad. For some in the upper echelons of China's government, devaluation would also be a kind of defeat—just as China marks the fiftieth anniversary of Communist rule. But, then, so is an economy running out of steam.

JAMES HARDING

The author is the Shanghai correspondent of the *Financial Times*.

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This is a story about heroes, worship them and the peop And it begins, at least in part of 1997 when Mike Wallace,

"60 Minutes" anchor, decided to do a seg senator and decorated former Vietnam president. Wallace's investigative team flew to Phoenix and did what it ordinar about its subject's past. For several days, the team ir many of whom painted a far more complicated por

Among those Anderson questioned was Grant Woods, McCain's first administrative assistant in Congress and Arizona's former attorney general. He also spoke with Amy Silverman, a young reporter with the *Phoenix New Times* who had probed McCain's poor environmental record and fund-raising practices so doggedly that the senator had refused to speak to her for five years.

In October 1997, after more than a month of work, the piece finally aired. But, to the surprise of both Woods and Silverman, none of their criticisms—and few from anyone else—appeared in the story. "It was pretty much a puff piece," says Woods. Silverman was so stunned by the tenor of the story, she wrote a column on media bias, while another reporter described Wallace as one of McCain's "bootlickers." At CBS, it turns out, there were questions, too. According to several people familiar with the show, a fight broke out between Wallace and his assistants over the portrayal, between those who wanted to treat McCain like a politician and those who wanted to treat him like a saint. "Anderson wanted to nail McCain and do the real story," says one person, but Wallace refused.

The Hero Myth

By DAVID GRANN

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about the people who le who tear them down. one day in the summer the famously hard-hitting ment on John McCain, the Arizona prisoner of war who is now running for led by producer Tom Anderson, ily would do—comb the city for details terviewed local officials, reporters, and friends, trait than the glowing one familiar to the public.

When I called Anderson to find out what, if anything, had happened, he said there had been a disagreement—but only over the angle of the story. There was a debate about whether to do a more traditional profile, "with warts and all," he said, or to concentrate on McCain's efforts to pass campaign finance reform. In the end, he said, they chose the latter, which was why so many of the warts wound up on the cutting-room floor. For his part, Wallace, who stoutly defends the piece, makes no bones about his feelings for McCain. "I'm thinking I may quit my job if he gets the nomination" and campaign for him, Wallace said recently.

However one interprets the "60 Minutes" episode, to hear such words from a paragon of the media establishment is remarkable. After all, McCain is staunchly pro-life and, on most issues, deeply conservative. And yet Wallace's statement is only slightly more positive than similar ones issued by other journalists. Though having only recently announced his candidacy, and trailing badly in the polls, McCain has already won a powerful constituency within the press, which is encouraging, even clamoring for, his nomination. As early as 1997, *The New York Times Magazine* published a 7,000-word cover story heralding McCain's quest "to restore honor" to politics. A few weeks later, *National Journal* weighed in with its own 5,000-word cover story headlined "THE LONE RANGER."

McCain's crusader image, originating from his days as a POW in Vietnam, has been burnished in the past few years by his willingness to buck his own party on the two issues the media regard as moral litmus tests for politicians: reforming the campaign finance system—which McCain tried to do by sponsoring a bill to ban unconstrained "soft money" donations—and regulating tobacco—which he's attempted to do through legislation that taxes cigarettes. More recently, McCain has gained admirers for boldly calling for ground troops in Kosovo, while Clinton and other Republican presidential candidates cower behind their spokesmen.

As a result, even the most committed liberals are lauding him—perhaps none more so than David Nyhan of *The Boston Globe*. "For a lot of people," Nyhan wrote in 1997, "the Senate is ninety-nine bozos and this guy." A few months later, despite McCain's annual zero rating from liberal interest

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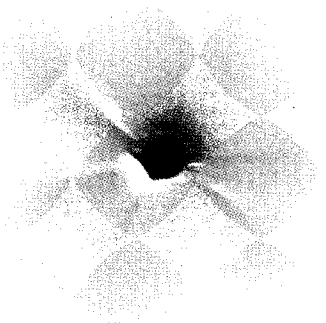

Over 27 million Americans participate in the hunting and target shooting sports. That's twice as many people as the combined populations of New York City, Chicago and Los Angeles.

For a sport so popular, it's amazing that, aside from participants, people know so little about it. Even participants are strangely quiet about the sport. The reason is partly because we never felt shooting sports needed to have a high profile. And it's partly due to the controversy surrounding firearms in today's society.

But the very fact that shooting sports participants have always understood that

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most people know oting sports.

firearms can be dangerous has made the sport remarkably safe. We know that owning a firearm is a full-time job that requires knowing how to use, handle and store firearms safely. As a result, accidents at shooting events and gun clubs are virtually unheard of.

The shooting sports are also among the most mentally challenging sports, requiring skill, accuracy and focus. And they're highly organized, with competitions at all levels including 21 Olympic events.

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NATIONAL SHOOTING SPORTS FOUNDATION

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groups, Nyhan raved: "Still alive as a possible entry is Senator John McCain ... fighter pilot, war hero, gutsy POW, crusader for campaign finance reform, call-'em-as-he-sees-'em conservative." By summer, as McCain was fighting for the tobacco bill, Nyhan could no longer contain himself: "You cannot break McCain's will. You cannot make him quit. You cannot coerce him with threats." The adulation appeared to reach its zenith when *Esquire* magazine emblazoned across its pages without a hint of irony: "JOHN MCCAIN WALKS ON WATER."

John McCain has clearly become something more than just John McCain, long-shot presidential contender. Heroes have always served as a reflection of their times, a template of who we are and what we want to be. And, in the wake of Bill Clinton's misconduct, McCain has become a reflection of our times, the focus of our desperate search for "character" in a president to the exclusion of almost everything else—even actual political beliefs.

AMERICA HAS ALWAYS searched for heroes in politics, and the press has always played a part in finding them. As early as the Constitutional Convention, pamphleteers, along with the rest of the country, turned to George Washington, the Revolutionary War hero who seemed to embody the nation's new spirit. During Washington's first year in office, France's chargé d'affaires, Louis-Guillaume Otto, observed with wonderment: "In more than one hundred gazettes, often very licentious ... his name has constantly been respected." No one was more respectful or worshipful than Parson Weems, a bookseller and writer who liked to say that great men made his bosom "heave with emotion unutterable." In 1800, caught in such a swoon, he published *History of the Life, Death, Virtues, and Exploits of General Washington*, where he unabashedly mixed fact and fiction: "'George,' said his father, 'do you know who killed that beautiful little cherry tree yonder in the garden?' This was a tough question; and George staggered under it for a moment; but quickly recovered himself: and looking at his father, with the sweet face of youth brightened with the inexpressible charm of all conquering truth, he bravely cried out, 'I can't tell a lie, Pa; you know I can't tell a lie. I did cut it with my hatchet.'"

Weems, of course, could tell a lie, and the story soon became part of the national myth. It was a tradition of exaltation into which the press would fit subsequent presidents, if not by embellishing them, then at least by protecting them. It hid, for example, the fact that Franklin D. Roosevelt was confined to a wheelchair and that John F. Kennedy was not really the author of *Profiles in Courage*, or a faithful husband, or even as spectacular a hero of PT 109 as the one portrayed by Cliff Robertson in the Hollywood movie.

In recent years, however, the press has torn down more political icons than it has built up. In place of Weems, there are Woodward and Isikoff. Every generation, of course, complains that all the great men belonged to the previous generation, but that seems especially true of this one. In 1958, when he was only 40 years old, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., one of Kennedy's hagiographers, complained that "we have no giants" left. Two decades later, after the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. and Kennedy, *Newsweek* lamented on its cover: "WHERE HAVE ALL THE HEROES GONE?"

The increasing crush of the press and the invasion of technology seem to have left no space for the living hero to breathe and have made the hunt for him all the more ferocious. In 1990, before he retired, *New York Times* columnist Russell Baker wrote ruefully: "Heroes are pretty well all washed up in the United States these days." And, after a year of impeachment, *The Wall Street Journal* seemed to quantify this despair when it ran a poll on the front page under the headline: "NO HEROES EMERGE."

"In the early morning of October twenty-six, 1967, Lt. Commander McCain departed for his twenty-third bombing mission over North Vietnam.... As McCain was completing his bombing mission, a Soviet-made surface-to-air missile struck his plane, shearing off the right wing."

Inside the enormous dining room, as the lights dim, there is a hush. It is South Carolina's 1999 annual Silver Elephant Banquet, and almost every Republican from the state is on hand. McCain is the guest of honor, his white hair forming a perfect halo around the crown of his bald head. The big screen above him brightens with his boyish face: he wears aviator glasses and a wry smile and looks, in the glint of the sun, a little like James Dean.

Most people in the room already know at least fragments of what happened next: McCain, until then known primarily for his carousing and his failing grades at Annapolis, ejected from his plane, still strapped to his chair, his legs outstretched and hands extended. The wind snapped both his arms, a knee shattered. Unconscious, he parachuted into a lake in the center of Hanoi, where a mob of Vietnamese dragged him from the water, stabbing him with bayonets. *"McCain was loaded into a truck and delivered to the infamous—and hated—Hanoi Hilton."*

A few days later, as he slipped in and out of consciousness, his captors discovered that he was the son of a powerful U.S. admiral. Suddenly sensing his propaganda value, the North Vietnamese offered to release him. But McCain refused, not wanting to embarrass his father or to receive special treatment: according to the military code of conduct, prisoners were supposed to be released in the order in which they'd been seized. Infuriated, the Vietnamese Communists kicked and beat him; then, as Robert Timberg described in *The Nightingale's Song*, they lashed McCain's broken arms behind his back and pulled until he was barely conscious. This went on for days. *"Before it was over, McCain spent five and a half years as a prisoner of war, two of them in solitary confinement."*

The film lasts only a few more minutes. It mentions McCain's crusade against special interests, his faith in God, and, in a veiled contrast to Clinton, his character. *"While we yearn for heroes who can lead us,"* the narrator concludes, *"John McCain's life is a genuine inspiration."*

As the lights flick back on, people blink, as if seeing something for the first time. McCain stands and moves behind the podium. The room is silent. Then, as if to break the spell, McCain leans against the podium and says with a big smile: "It doesn't take a hero to intercept a surface-to-air missile."

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HEROES, MARSHALL FISHWICK observed in *The Hero, American Style*, are "always a barometer to the national 'climate of opinion.'" And so, as with the rest of us, they change. Dwight D. Eisenhower gave way to John F. Kennedy, and Henry Ford to Ralph Nader. And thus Bill Clinton, the ideological hero of 1992, has given way to John McCain, the characterological hero of 2000.

It is hard to remember now, of course, that Clinton once embodied anything more than his own urges. Yet, whereas McCain now exemplifies a set of noble values, Clinton once represented what then seemed most important to the press—a set of noble ideas. Joe Klein, who would later savage Clinton's character in *Primary Colors*, wrote ebulliently before the 1993 inauguration: "The Clinton campaign . . . was more than just a holy war.... '[N]ew ideas' types all were hoping that their moment had finally come, that it was time to reclaim the idealism of the Kennedy years." The adulation was so overwhelming, even blinding, that Howell Raines, then Washington bureau chief at *The New York Times*, called it "the most dramatic example of infatuation among some reporters since Kennedy." A poll taken after the election showed that nearly 90 percent of the Washington press corps had voted for Clinton (a draft dodger) over George Bush (a veteran of World War II).

Whereas everyone insisted at the time that we must finally break with the past, only seven years later everyone is trying to reopen it. There are Steven Spielberg's *Saving Private Ryan* and Peter Jennings's *The Century*. There are Tom Brokaw's *The Greatest Generation* ("I am in awe of them") and Harry Evans's *The American Century*. And there is Nyhan of the *Globe*, who not only looks back on McCain's past but mythologizes it as boldly as Weems once did Washington's. "Mayday! Mayday!" Nyhan writes in one notable example—a made-up reconstruction of McCain's fateful crash. "Tiger Two to Naval Command. I'm taking flak from my left and heavy ack-ack from my right. Fuel is low, and I'm out here alone. The bad guys just winged me. Looks like I'm going in. Mayday! Mayday!"

Though reporters are famous for unmasking their heroes, they tend to view politics—and by extension their own jobs—in mythical terms. And there is a sense among many of them that something went horribly wrong with Clinton—that he has degraded not only his office but theirs as well, that instead of producing giants among them like Theodore White, or even Woodward and Bernstein, he has turned them all into Drudges. It is a sentiment not only of reporters and pundits but of politicians and pollsters, consultants and academics. And it is a sentiment that has gradually seeped into the public at large. In the latest Pew Research Center poll, 77 percent of Independents and 64 percent of Democrats said they were "tired of all the problems associated with the Clinton administration." "I think people finally realize how important character is," says Marshall Wittmann of the Heritage Foundation.

Indeed, if George Bush, the World War II hero with an aimless domestic agenda, created the perfect space for Clinton, then Clinton, the ideological hero with an aimless character, has created the perfect space for McCain. They are like a photograph and a negative of their generation: one self-indulgent, the other selfless; one coy, the other candid; one devious, the other decent. In Vietnam, McCain did precisely what Clinton did not: he fought, and did so voluntarily. What's more, in a war in which, as Phil Caputo once wrote, Americans "had done nothing more than endure," McCain, who had endured more than anyone, reinvented the myth of the war hero, which had largely been shattered by the nightly footage of napalm bombings and body counts.

Unlike Eisenhower or Ulysses S. Grant, the traditional war icons, McCain did not take a hill or liberate a city; he did not sneak behind enemy lines or sink a ship. He went to prison and was tortured. In some sense, he became an emblem of the nation's suffering, a metaphor of all the people imprisoned by the war—"trapped in it, trapped by it, trapped against it," as Todd Gitlin, the '60s activist and author, put it to me. In a war of victims, McCain had become the ultimate one. The tragic hero.

While other combatants were spat on, he returned to cheering crowds and the pealing of church bells. He appeared at parades on his crutches in his neatly pressed white uniform and even met with the president of the United States.

But it was his oddly serene demeanor that transformed him into an icon around whom both sides of the culture wars could unite. Unlike Senator John Kerry of Massachusetts, a Navy gunboat commander, he never threw his ribbons at the Capitol in protest. He told Timberg that he didn't have any nightmares or flashbacks. He even forgave Jane Fonda. "If you look back in anger," McCain would say, "it can be not only nonproductive, but self-destructive."

Of all the former prisoners, he somehow seemed the most free.

"I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT the fuck I was talking about," says McCain, picking at his onion rings. "I didn't have a clue."

As he sits with three reporters at a Burger King in South Carolina, explaining his first plunge into politics in 1982 and his bid now to become president, he does something I've never seen before from a politician: speak like an ordinary person. When another senator's name comes up, he blurts out, "He hates [GOP Senator] Mitch McConnell, and I can't blame him."

Later, as we get on a small plane to fly to Charleston, an aide hands him a speech. "Do I have to look at this now?" McCain asks. "Tell him I'll look at it later. Tell 'im it's marvelous." He pauses, then notices me taking notes, and adds, "It's hard for me to focus on that shit right now."

Such talk from a presidential candidate would once have been considered scandalous; today, it is refreshing. In the age of sound bites and spin doctors, most politicians offer the same speech over and over or, in the case of Clinton, the same shallow spin. Which explains why McCain has become not only a war hero but also something even rarer today: a political hero. After bumping into McCain in 1996 for the first time, TNR's Michael Lewis exclaimed with delight: "A politician who lived dangerously! A politician who spoke his mind!"

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In fact, even as McCain eschews the rules of the modern politician, he embraces the rules of the modern celebrity—namely, the need to reveal himself. Though the legendary Rough Rider (and one of McCain's own role models) Teddy Roosevelt used to hold informal press conferences while he shaved, most others have retreated into political cocoons. John Glenn, who orbited the Earth alone, surrounded himself with handlers on the ground. Bill Bradley, the former basketball star also running for president, still makes reporters fax him their clips so that he can know *them*.

McCain, meanwhile, lets cameras in his office, his home, even his car. He answers press calls at three o'clock in the morning. He is blunt and open. "He went through a messy divorce and made mistakes," says Albert Eisele, editor of *The Hill* newspaper. "But he doesn't try to do a Clinton on that.... He doesn't give you a lot of B.S." McCain seems to understand that, in an age in which the press will find you no matter where you hide, candor can become the only form of guile. "Frankly," says Eisele, "I think a lot of reporters have given him a bye because of it."

WHICH BRINGS US back to the story of Mike Wallace and "60 Minutes." In Arizona, there have long been whispers about McCain—murmurs that he is not the saint he seems to be. When I call an aide who worked for him for many years, he says ominously, "Follow the trail back to Phoenix." And so I do.

Like Anderson and his "60 Minutes" team, I spend days combing through McCain's past. I track down rumors that he once told a local reporter to go "fuck" himself (true) and punched a lobbyist in the face (false). I speak to friends and former aides, who recount how his temper would sometimes explode without warning, revealing, they speculate, someone far more troubled by his experience in Vietnam than he ever lets on.

During the Keating Five scandal, when Mark Flatten, a political reporter with The Tribune Newspapers, asked him about trips to the Bahamas he had taken with Charles Keating, the savings-and-loan magnate who was later indicted for fraud, McCain went ballistic. "He started screaming and shouting ... and pounding his fists," Flatten recalls. "Finally I just said, 'If you don't want to answer my question you don't have to, but I don't have to listen to you rant and rave.'" After Amy Silverman published a series of critical articles on him, he purportedly cornered her father, the general manager of one of Arizona's largest water utility companies, and showered him with curses, according to a former McCain aide and another person familiar with the incident. (Dick Silverman would not deny the incident but refused to discuss it, saying through a spokesman only that his conversations with politicians were private matters; McCain said the same.) In time, the senator became famous back home for his written apologies, which began to fill his friends' and enemies' drawers like souvenirs.

In politics, there was another side to him as well. Though he went against his own party on campaign finance reform and tobacco, people soon discovered that he could be just as opportunistic and ruthless behind the scenes as any other politician. In his first bid for Congress, he scanned the country looking for a district where he could win, then moved there even though he had never lived in the state. As he built up his local power base, he courted corporate donors in the liquor industry and schemed against his rivals. In 1994, when Barbara Barrett decided to challenge one of McCain's allies, Governor Fife Symington, for the GOP nomination, McCain threatened to end her political career. Barrett confirmed the story only after I'd obtained the details from several other sources. "He asked my price to get me out of the race," Barrett recalls. "Then, when I wouldn't succumb, he indicated that he would use every ounce of his power to destroy me." His very virtues in Hanoi—his hard-headedness and unwavering loyalty—now seemed more like liabilities. When McCain's old friend Attorney General Grant Woods eventually convicted Symington on seven counts of bank and wire fraud, McCain became enraged with him, too. "I had to deal with the law," says Woods. "John could never understand that.... I think it went back to his background in the military. He could not understand that the attorney general is not supposed to be a good soldier."

Finally, there is the story of his first wife. A tall, slender model from Philadelphia, Carol McCain waited for her husband to return from Vietnam for five and a half years—a kind of modern-day Penelope to McCain's Odysseus. Then, on Christmas Eve in 1969, she suffered more tragedy: she skidded off the road into a telephone pole, her body thrown through the windshield onto the snow, both legs and one arm broken, her spleen ruptured. After nearly losing her left leg and enduring more than a dozen operations, she emerged four inches shorter than before the accident. Not wanting her husband to feel any more pain than he already did in prison, she never told him of the accident—and he learned about it only on his way home. Despite such devotion, McCain soon began to chase other women when he returned from Vietnam, just as he had at the Naval Academy, where he ran around with strippers and stewardesses, his collar turned up, a cigarette dangling from his mouth. His marriage to Carol soon ended in divorce. "I think she has reason to be bitter," he told Timberg afterward. Ever loyal, Carol would only say: "The breakup of our marriage was not caused by my accident or Vietnam or any of those things. I don't know that it might not have happened if John had never been gone. I attribute it more to John turning forty and wanting to be twenty-five again than I do to anything else."

And so, after days of digging, I discover what I already knew—that McCain is only human. But I also discover that, in a life spanning more than 60 years and filled with tragedy, he has been more decent and honorable than most men. And I discover, more importantly, that, in an age of junk people, he is the real thing. A genuine war hero.

THE TROUBLE IS that, in the wake of Clinton, character has become the only measure of a man. It has become a substitute for ideology, even though ideology and the programs that evolve from it may have farther-reaching implications and are certainly far easier to gauge. It is as if we decided to hire someone to deliver the mail based on the fact

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that he once saved a woman dying in the street, rather than on whether he ever delivered the mail on time. And it is after no digging at all that I discover what almost no one ever mentions about McCain: his voting record.

Though hailed in the press invariably as a "maverick" (part of the title of the "60 Minutes" segment) or "liberal" Republican because of his stances on campaign finance reform and tobacco, McCain is in fact more conservative than the man whom he succeeded in the Senate and whom the press once vilified for his extreme beliefs: Barry Goldwater. Rather than a libertarian, McCain is a quiet social conservative who received a zero rating from the liberal Americans for Democratic Action and voted with his party 93 percent of the time in 1996. He voted to convict Bill Clinton on all impeachment counts. He endorsed every item in the Contract with America, including term limits. He voted for a constitutional amendment to balance the budget and another one to prohibit flag burning. In the past, he has opposed federal funding for abortions and supported a constitutional amendment to ban them. He fought against legislation barring job discrimination against homosexuals, and he was the keynote speaker at a fund-raiser for the Oregon Citizens Alliance, an anti-homosexual lobby. "He's a thousand percent anti-gay," says Barney Frank, the Democratic congressman from Massachusetts, who is himself gay. "He's not even on the moderate side on abortion. The only difference between him and other conservatives is that he bashes with his votes rather than his rhetoric."

A politician's secrets, it turns out, are not all buried in his past but exposed right there in his policies. McCain voted in the House against making Martin Luther King Day a federal holiday and has recently opposed raising the minimum wage. He has lobbied vigorously for the death penalty and against myriad environmental regulations. In his first year in Congress, he received a zero rating from the national League of Conservation Voters and in the last Congress received nearly the same rating as the poster child of the anti-environmental movement, House Republican leader Tom DeLay. In addition, he voted against even modest gun controls, including the 1994 assault-weapons ban and the 1993 Brady Bill. "He's somebody we've always had a good relationship with," says Bill Powers, director of public affairs at the National Rifle Association.

FOR A CONSERVATIVE, of course, there is nothing particularly striking about any of these stands, and McCain does little to hide them. What is striking is how few reporters and liberals who support him even know or care. "I can't believe he's anti-gay," says one Washington political reporter. "He's so nice." Even many on the right are unaware of his positions. "I had no idea that he was pro-life," says David Boaz, the executive vice president of the libertarian Cato Institute.

Ironically, most conservatives have assumed that because the media support McCain he must not be one of them—that he is, as lobbyist Grover Norquist puts it to me dismissively, the candidate of *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*. But in fact the liberal media have increasingly adopted the approach that conservatives have always advocated and now ignore themselves: that character *is* everything. "There is something about McCain the man," says Mike Wallace. "When did you last see a hero as president of the United States?"

In the era of McCainism, ideology no longer matters. "I'm beginning to understand the war that must occur inside a fourteen-year-old boy who discovers he is more sexually attracted to boys than to girls," Michael Lewis, who voted for Ralph Nader during the last election, wrote in TNR. "The longer I hang around McCain the harder it is to fight the feeling that just maybe I'm . . . Republican."

THE OLD PASSION for morally just policies—for the Great Society or the New Deal or health care reform—has been replaced with a passion for merely morally just processes, and no issue crystallizes this shift more than the very issue over which McCain has been beatified: campaign finance reform. After all, campaign finance reform is not really about advancing either a liberal or a conservative agenda; it's about ensuring that the electoral system through which such agendas are passed remains pure. And it is really, at its core, about character.

McCain's lone crusade shows that, unlike ordinary politicians, he is incorruptible. As in Vietnam, he is still able to stand up to anyone, even his latest captors—Republicans and lobbyists and special interest groups. It is proof that, as the New York *Daily News* exclaimed, "not all heroes are dead."

The problem is that, unlike baseball or even war, politics is rarely heroic in the traditional sense. There are usually no home runs or military routs but backroom deals and drawn-out compromises and tedious regulations. Here stubbornness and unwavering loyalty may be counterproductive. Here manipulativeness may sometimes be more effective than saintliness. (McCain's tobacco and campaign finance reform bills both died.) And here ideas matter, just as integrity does.

McCain seems to understand this better than his own worshipers. In 1996, he initially endorsed Phil Gramm, an arch-conservative who evaded Vietnam, over Bob Dole, a more moderate Republican who nearly lost his life in World War II. What you do in the present, McCain often says, is as important as what you did in the past.

It is natural, of course, to wish that more of our leaders were great men. As Ralph Waldo Emerson has said, "All mythology opens with demigods." They define and elevate us. But there is also something unnatural about our desperate desire for heroes in politics. The political hero is not like the sports champion or matinee idol or daring inventor; like the war hero, he is born only of tragedy. "In order to be a hero [in the classic sense], which I steadfastly object to being called," says McCain during our last interview, "there has to be . . . service and sacrifice not only from the one who is designated the hero but also from others. Otherwise, there would not be the conditions for the hero to emerge."

In the play *Life of Galileo* by Bertolt Brecht, which McCain recalls, one of the characters says, "Unhappy the land that has no heroes."

"No," Galileo replies, "unhappy the land that needs heroes." ■

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Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Trial and (Some) Error

BRAVO—WARM IF LIMITED—for David Mamet. This dramatist of the American growl, this winnower of the mythic from the grunts of Chicago, this feral explorer of today's counterfeits, has aligned himself with—of all periods and places—Georgian England, and in most ways he has justified his choice. Few playwrights of this century are more alien to Mamet's familiar world than the natty Terence Rattigan, Mayfair's erstwhile ambassador to the muses, and few plays are more remote from Mamet in ethos and structure than Rattigan's **The Winslow Boy** (Sony Pictures Classics), which Mamet has now adapted and directed.

Set in London just before World War I, the play is based on a historical incident that occurred a decade or so earlier. Rattigan trimmed and tailored the facts, turning them into a drama of which Pinero would have been proud, a theatrical structure that perfectly fit its period and theme. And this is the work, produced in the mid-1940s in London and New York and filmed in 1948, that attracted the author of *American Buffalo* and *Glengarry Glen Ross* and *House of Games*.

The story is of the Winslow family, living in South Kensington in 1912; father, who is a retired bank manager, and mother and three children: Catherine, a suffragette, Dickie, at Oxford when he bothers to attend, and the youngest, Ronnie, who is a thirteen-year-old cadet in the Royal Naval College at Osbourne. Ronnie is accused by the college of stealing a postal order, worth five shillings, from another cadet; he is expelled. Winslow *père* believes Ronnie's protestations of innocence. He then goes through a long, wearing, and expensive series of legal moves until the wrong is righted in an unusual trial; but the process costs Winslow his health and modest wealth, costs Dickie his Oxford education and Catherine her very proper army fiancé. Still, right has been done.

For my leaky self, I admit that I began to sob—at the Broadway play fifty years ago, at the earlier film, and at Mamet's film—when Winslow asks Ronnie, just returned from school, to tell him the truth of the matter. The father says he will not punish the boy if he stole the order, but he will not forgive the boy if he lies. As Ronnie denies the theft, we can see the whole drama wheeling into place, the magnificent engine of one man's struggle for right against the armory of state. Citizen Winslow will challenge the British Empire's wrong to his son. How wonderful it is to be in at the beginning of a fight for right that, we know, is going to end with affirmation of principle. *This* is what a fairy tale should be, and, oddly enough, it's all the more fantastical because most of it actually did happen.

Mamet has said several times that he was drawn to Rattigan's play because he thinks it an excellent melodrama. I don't know what he means. For example, there is no villain in the piece. Not even the great faceless force of English law can be so construed. The visible action of the play entirely concerns sympathetic people—chiefly Winslow and his daughter, who are determined to see the matter through. The one somewhat theatrical personage, the brilliant barrister Sir Robert Morton, who accepts Ronnie's case, is credibly histrionic: it is his profession. No, not the plotty kicks of melodrama here but a robust, old-fashioned, well-made drama. Richard Gilman said once that the well-made play reflects a basic belief that our world is well-made. Hence *The Winslow Boy*. Anyway, Mamet was moved by it, and he moves us. He has condensed the play more than (as I recall) Rattigan himself did for the 1948 film, but he leaves no doubt about the gravamen of the piece.

Mamet's real triumph, however, is in his directing. Like every good director, he has "seen" the picture before he made it; and he saw it as a piece with the intimacy and physicality of a play that nonetheless flowed like cinema. From the very beginning Mamet keeps his camera relatively close to his actors—not in close-up but in proximity to people whom he views as flesh and blood, not shadows, and his framing often uses the limited yet fertile depth of stage compositions instead of the possible vastness of the screen. For instance, an important sequence takes place in Sir Robert Morton's chambers. Mamet keeps the door open, and through it, as the drama progresses in the foreground, we see Sir Robert's clerk waiting, slightly out of focus. Later, when needed, the clerk steps into the room and into focus. This simple ingenuity gives the room depth without distortion and (something that Renoir occasionally does) provides an almost choreographic touch as the clerk steps forward into focus.

Then there's sound. Recently I quoted Robert Bresson's belief that sound gives the screen a third dimension. Note how Mamet uses off-screen sounds—the mob in the street outside the Winslow house, often heard but not often seen—thus amplifying the dimensions of the film with a theater device.

Most of Mamet's casting is right on the mark. Nigel Hawthorne, the veteran who is best known here for *The Madness of King George*, plays Arthur Winslow with rich complexity—the middle-class English paterfamilias who takes his responsibilities with some relish. Gemma Jones, so poised and patient as Mrs. Dashwood in *Sense and Sensibility*, is once again a reticent pillar of strength as Mrs. Winslow. Matthew Pidgeon is passable as the lightweight Dickie, and Guy Edwards as Ronnie, apparently chosen because Mamet didn't want an obtrusively winning boy in the role, is unobtrusive. Aden Gillett, who looks as if he were in uniform even when he's in civvies, functions well as Catherine's departing fiancé. And Jeremy Northam, who was a depressing fizzle as an American gangster chief in *Gloria*, wipes out that flop with his elegant, incisive Sir Robert. I wouldn't bet that Northam (and Mamet) never looked at Robert Donat's performance in the earlier film, but any actor who can even remind us of Donat deserves applause. Northam seems a bit young to play a celebrated barrister; presumably Mamet wanted to cast the role appropriately "opposite" his Catherine.

This brings us to an unavoidable delicate matter. Mamet has cast his wife, Rebecca Pidgeon, as Catherine. She is inadequate. Better here than I have seen her before, Pidgeon shows some actor's intelligence and intent, but she lacks the color and power to fulfill what she may perceive in the role. Mamet used his previous wife, Lindsay Crouse, in some of his plays and in the leading role of *House of Games*, and, without stellar scintillation, she at least supplied what was essential. Now Mamet is employing his present wife, Pidgeon, a product of the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art who adds no luster to that institution or to her husband's work. I have seen her in two Mamet plays and

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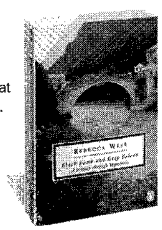

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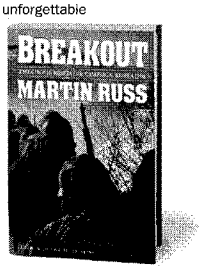

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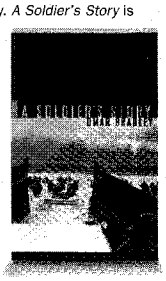

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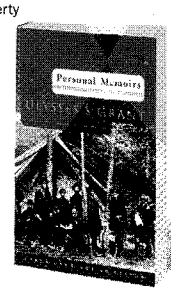

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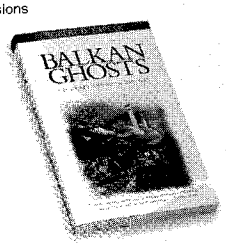

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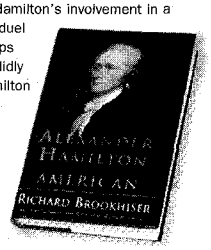

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two previous Mamet films (*Homicide* and *The Spanish Prisoner*), and her Catherine confirms a sad impression: she is unequipped for the prominence that he gives her. These remarks are obviously not an intrusion into the Mamets' private life; I'm dealing with the public manifestation of their private affinity. To put it with maximum permissible bluntness, his loyalty to his wife, which leads him to misjudge her talent, is marring his work.

Ironically, the very last shot of the film, which is a close-up of Pidgeon, crowns Mamet's directing triumph here. How simple it is, yet how striking and imaginative. Sir Robert, when he leaves the Winslow house after the trial, makes a gently provocative remark to Catherine. Mamet doesn't pull the camera up or away for a conventional finish, with Catherine in the garden. He just fastens on her pleased reaction as the picture ends. Excellent.

All in all, *The Winslow Boy* is good news. This is the first time that Mamet has directed something that is not his own original work. He is so successful—with the large exception noted above—that he now has us hoping he'll adapt and direct something else that we couldn't possibly predict. ■

Reasons and Unreasons

By COLIN MCGINN

What We Owe to Each Other by T. M. Scanlon

(Harvard University Press, 420 pp., $35)

KNOWING THE DIFFERENCE between right and wrong is one thing. Knowing what this difference consists in is quite another. When I judge that murder is wrong, what am I really judging? What is the underlying content of moral thoughts? There have been many answers to this seemingly simple question.

There is the view that judgments of right and wrong are about what God wishes or decrees, positively or negatively (divine command theories). There is the view that such judgments record the likely consequences of actions for human happiness (utilitarian consequentialism). There is the view that moral judgments make essential reference to the natural rights of agents, so that wrongness is a matter of violating those rights and rightness is respecting them (natural rights theories). There is the view that morality represents a social contract of some kind, an agreement to abide by various rules for the regulation of communal behavior (contractualism). There is the view that all of the above views are guilty of reductionism about morality, and the only thing that can be said is that rightness is rightness and wrongness is wrongness, with no further analysis possible (moral primitivism).

COLIN MCGINN is Professor of Philosophy at Rutgers University. He is the author, most recently, of *The Mysterious Flame* (Basic Books).

Much moral philosophy has been a debate about which of these views is the correct account of the content of morality as we ordinarily understand it. What makes an action or principle right or wrong? What sorts of facts are moral facts? Those are the essential perplexities of the moral philosopher's enterprise.

T. M. Scanlon, a moral philosopher at Harvard University, is engaged in precisely this enterprise. His preferred formulation of the question is in terms of reasons. What is the general nature of the reasons that we give for supposing actions to be right or wrong? What is the correct analysis of moral reasons for action? Answering these questions, Scanlon believes, will tell us the nature of moral motivation and the content of moral judgments. Suppose I say that acts of murder are wrong: what kind of reason for not murdering does this judgment supply? Whatever it is will explain my not murdering people (my moral motivation) and will elucidate the force of the judgment I make (my moral content).

The answer that Scanlon adopts is a form of contractualism. He thinks that morality is a matter of certain sorts of agreements between rational agents. The content of moral reasons, therefore, consists in considerations concerning certain sorts of interpersonal relations. It is not that we have explicitly made a contract not to do various things, so that wrongness consists in violating this contract. It is, rather, that we have a tacit mutual understanding that our actions should be interpersonally defensible. Scanlon states the essence of his theory in this way:

> When I ask myself what reason the fact that an action would be wrong provides me with not to do it, my answer is that such an action would be one that I could not justify to others on grounds I could expect them to accept. This leads me to describe the subject matter of judgments of right and wrong by saying that they are judgments about what would be permitted by principles that could not reasonably be rejected, by people who were moved to find principles for the general regulation of behavior that others, similarly motivated, could not reasonably reject. In particular, an act is wrong if and only if any principle that permitted it would be one that could reasonably be rejected by people with the motivation just described (or, equivalently, if and only if it would be disallowed by any principle that such people could not reasonably reject).

In other words, an act is wrong when permitting acts of that type could reasonably be objected to by others, on the assumption that we all want principles that can be agreed upon. More simply put, wrongness is a matter of whether people could reasonably object to the action in question. Wrong actions are the ones that are objectionable, the ones that cannot be justified.

When we set ourselves to arrive at sound moral principles, in Scanlon's view, we are fundamentally asking which principles are justifiable to others. Thus one's reason for not doing immoral things is that these things are not justifiable to others, and what one judges when one judges that an action is wrong is that it is not so justifiable. Morality is a matter of keeping up one's end in a dialogue or an argument. When I accuse you of immorality in stealing an old lady's purse, I am telling you that I and others could reasonably object to your action.

SCANLON DEFENDS his contractualism over four hundred precise and scrupulous pages. His book was seventeen years in the making. It is a work of great intelligence and analytical skill. It will be the subject of many seminar papers and conference papers. But the theory itself is terrible, and the style of the book is numbing. As in the above excerpt, which is the pithiest passage that I could find, the formulations tend to be cumbersome and unintuitive, exact without being clear or memorable. Scanlon seems reluctant to formulate his theory in crisp simple declaratives, as I just did in

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paraphrasing him. The reason, I suspect, is that his theory starts to look remarkably thin and unconvincing once it is stated forthrightly. Indeed, Scanlon's book illustrates the dangers of the academic analytical style in dressing up the flimsiest of ideas in indirect and pedantically exact language. There are certainly valuable discussions in this book—Scanlon's treatment of reasons and their relation to desires is persuasive and sometimes interesting, and he has a nice chapter on promises and lies—but the central contractualist theory seems to me unhelpful, vacuous, and fundamentally flawed.

The first and most pressing problem with Scanlon's theory is that it is circular. It presupposes what it is meant to explain, in the most obvious way. An action is said to be wrong if it may be criticized by others. But on what grounds is it criticizable? On moral grounds, surely. But then aren't we back where we began? An action is wrong if it can correctly be said to be wrong. But weren't we being told what it *means* to say that an action is wrong? Circle!

Consider an example of Scanlon's. It is wrong to drop radioactive debris from a plane over the population below (assuming that this is just an act of gratuitous barbarity); which is to say, such an action could be reasonably criticized by others. But on what grounds might it be criticized? If it may be criticized on merely non-moral grounds—say, on the grounds that the debris will spoil the beauty of the sunset as it descends to earth—then this criticism does not entail that the action was morally wrong. But if it may be criticized on moral grounds—namely, that it has needlessly caused the suffering and the death of thousands of innocent people—then *that* is the reason the action is wrong.

As Scanlon himself remarks in considering this kind of objection: "To say that a moral person cares about the justifiability of his or her actions to others is at best a roundabout way of saying that such a person is concerned to act in a way that is responsive to the value of others' lives and to their valid moral claims." Exactly! The reference to interpersonal justifiability adds nothing to the simple claim that the action was wrong because of the suffering and the death that it caused.

When I call an action wrong, I may well imply that it is not justifiable to others, but the only thing that this can mean is that it is not *morally* justifiable; and then the moral value thus invoked becomes the basis of the judgment of wrongness. Suppose I call a certain act of murder wrong. Scanlon says that my statement means that this act is not justifiable to others. But the reason that it is not so justifiable is that murder is wrong. If I am asked why I think murder is not justifiable to others, I will say that it is wrong; and it is not wrong because it is not so justifiable.

To be told that wrong actions are objectionable tells us nothing about the nature of moral judgments. Scanlon's view amounts to a tautology, and therefore it is trivial. Contrast his analysis with the other theories that I listed at the outset: with utilitarianism, for instance. Utilitarianism says that an action is wrong when it leads to unhappy consequences. Such an account is not trivially circular (though it may be objectionable on other grounds). Utilitarianism tells us what wrongness actually consists in, namely the production of unhappiness; while Scanlon's account merely tells us that the wrong is what can be objected to as being wrong.

This circularity is particularly evident when we notice that Scanlon, when he refers to an action's justifiability, must mean its ideal justifiability. For I might well be able to justify wrong actions to other people if I am an expert sophist and propagandist, and they might not be able, owing to misinformation or to their cognitive frailty, to marshal cogent objections to my immoral acts. Surely my powers of persuasion here do not imply that my actions are permissible. My persuasiveness implies only that the moral truth is concealed from my duped interlocutors, or that they are equally mired in immorality—as in the case of Serbian leaders persuading Serbian people that genocidal tactics against Albanians are morally acceptable.

Scanlon's reply to this natural objection is that he means to be speaking of ideal justifiability, where the persuaded others are well-informed, rational, and moral. But notice that last qualification: our interlocutors have to know what is right. If we can justify an action to someone and she does not know what is right, then our success in justification has no tendency to show that action to be moral. But if our interlocutor must be supposed to be in possession of the moral truth in order to count as sufficiently ideal, then again the theory is exasperatingly circular. Ideal justifiability simply means justification that tracks the moral truth. If you and I both know that murder is wrong, then indeed we will agree that murder is wrong; but agreement in the absence of moral knowledge has no tendency to settle questions of right and wrong. Which again begs the question about what precisely is the content of moral knowledge.

In the end, Scanlon has to say that an action is wrong if it is not justifiable; but in this impersonal sense it is totally trivial to be told that an action is wrong if it is not justifiable. Of course it isn't justifiable, since it is wrong! The point is simple: agreement only works to determine moral truth if we already assume that what is agreed upon is true. We cannot suppose that agreement is more basic than rightness, and explanatory of it. It would be different if Scanlon were advocating some kind of extreme relativism, according to which right in a society is defined as what people in that society agree is right; but he is emphatically not doing that, as he himself stresses. He is trying to find a philosophical foundation for the traditional absoluteness of moral values. And his theory only does this if it is flagrantly circular.

SCANLON'S THEORY is also too weak to capture our notions of right and wrong. Suppose I condemn the actions of the Serbian forces in Kosovo. I describe them as monstrous, evil, and utterly unethical. According to Scanlon's formula, the content of my statement is merely that these actions could be reasonably rejected by people, including the victims of those actions. But this is surely to misrepresent the force of my statement.

Woodruff Court

Phooey on rue! The wind's brisk, the sky's blue.
The cul-de-sac smacks of Briggs & Stratton

rotary mowers & Smokey Joes on back patios.
I shall rejoice in the noises & smells

of my neighbors recreating while the ice
cream truck plays "Three Blind Mice"

so eerily that my pet cat behind the couch
sets up a yowl for an unsighted mouse.

Baloney on spumoni! This all-American Good
Humor's no exotic gelato. My little dog laughs

to see such Sunday sports on downhome TV
as I have guffawed at & shall rejoice in

till the sky breaks faith & it rains cats & dogs
& my new-seeded lawn runs away with the water.

James Reiss

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In condemning the Serbian actions in Kosovo as unethical, I am saying something much stronger than Scanlon's contractualism specifies; and it can hardly be that this extra strength can be captured by adding that it would be very reasonable to object to the actions in question, or that the actions are not justifiable *at all.* Scanlon's contractualist formula is too bland and unspecific. The moral force of the condemnation only emerges if we ask what the grounds of the objection are—namely, that the actions are instances of genocidal murder. That is the real content of the moral judgment, not the insipid assertion that the soldiers and the politicians responsible could not justify their actions to people in terms that they could not reasonably reject.

BUT IS IT EVEN CLEAR that meeting Scanlon's conditions for wrongness gives us a case of immoral action at all? We might all agree that it is sensible for pedestrians to pass each other on one side only (say, the right side) and not alternate unpredictably from one side to the other, because in that way pedestrian traffic will move more efficiently. But what of somebody who alternates his movements along the street, because he prefers a bit of variety in his life? His actions are not justifiable, but are they immoral? People could reasonably object to this person's policy, citing the convenience of the one-side rule, but could they condemn his actions as morally wrong? Or suppose that we all agreed that a certain length of hair was the most beautiful. We could reasonably object, to someone who grew his hair to a different length, that this person was lowering the aesthetic standards of society. But is this deviant being immoral?

The point is that there can be social rules for the regulation of behavior that depend upon non-moral values—convenience and attractiveness, in my examples—so that violating these rules infringes no properly moral duty. Hence the lack of justifiability to others according to *some* value does not amount to immorality. Only if we stipulate that the lack of justification is of a moral kind do we get a condition sufficient for moral wrongness; but then again we are trapped in Scanlon's circle. Not all reasonable regulation of behavior is moral regulation. Morality cannot be derived from the idea of reasonableness to others. Scanlon's formula tries not to build moral value in directly, so that we gain an impression of explanatory progress, but unless moral value is built in to it, we do not get morality out of it. So the theory is inadequate.

Scanlon's theory, moreover, is in another respect too strong, in the sense that it demands too much of a claim of moral wrongness. Why is it wrong to cause unnecessary pain to infants and animals? Is it because they could reasonably object to such treatment? Hardly. They are not able to reason or to debate, but it is still wrong to cause them pain. Scanlon confronts this problem, and responds to it by stipulating that such actions would not be justifiable to the trustees of infants and animals. They cannot argue with us about our actions, but their representatives can. But what if they have no representatives? And do our actions toward them only count as being wrong once such trustees have been appointed?

Surely, the reason it is wrong to cause non-rational beings pain is that pain is a bad thing, and hence it is wrong to cause it for no good reason. The wrongness does not consist in the fact that the hypothetical trustees of such beings would strenuously object to such actions. They would object because the actions are wrong; the actions are not wrong because they would object. It is a consequence of an action's being wrong that it is not justifiable to rational thinkers; it is not that being unjustifiable constitutes being wrong.

SUPPOSE THAT we were all excellent at moral judgment, but weak at giving our reasons and thereby persuading others. We know when actions are right and wrong, but we lack the practice of defending our judgments to others and considering their objections. Does that mean that we are not making moral judgments after all? Scanlon maintains that the content of a moral judgment consists in a claim about justification to others. But if we cannot offer such justifications, then our moral judgments would have no content, on his theory. He must be mistaken: it is possible to judge that something is wrong and be correct in your judgment even though you do not have the wherewithal to persuade others by rational means. What Scanlon is describing is a kind of senior-common-room notion of morality: what is right is what you can persuade your colleagues of in a context of rational debate. But for many people, perhaps for most people, moral judgment has little to do with argumentative skill, or with discursive cogency in moral debate. (Scanlon's theory needs all people to be professors.) This is why it is not contradictory to say "I know this is wrong but I cannot explain why."

There is an obvious parallel in philosophy for Scanlon's view of morality in connection with the concept of truth. It is pragmatism, or the familiar idea that truth in general—even for scientific statements—consists in a certain kind of interpersonal agreement. (For example, my belief that London is the capital of England is true if and only if I can justify this belief to others.) C. S. Peirce viewed truth along these lines: truth in belief is what a community of rational investigators will eventually converge on. This is a sort of "contractualist" view of truth in the rather weak sense that Scanlon employs: when we call a statement true we are saying something about an interpersonal justifiability, about an existing consensus of opinion. Pragmatism makes truth reside in the epistemic practices of a particular community.

It is amazing to me that Scanlon never brings up this obvious parallel in the course of his very long and detailed book, so it is hard to know whether he would embrace the same kind of position here. I doubt that he would, in view of the well-known difficulties with the pragmatic conception of truth: it cannot make room for undiscoverable truth, and it implies that an entire community cannot be in error. In any case, the parallel seems to me to reveal the weaknesses in Scanlon's position on right and wrong. For much the same points that I made against his treatment of these notions apply even more clearly to this concept of truth.

The idea that truth is identical to justifiability is either circular or inadequate, depending upon how we understand the notion of justifiability. We can often justify statements that are not true, as when there is evidence for something that is not actually the case, so the account is inadequate; but if we mean ideal justifiability, then we are simply calling truth by another name. In addition, to justify something is to justify it *as true,* so we are not managing to analyze the notion of truth in terms of the notion of justification. Moreover, a statement can be true and not be justifiable by us, because it might be true without our being able to know that it is, as with many statements about the remote past.

The concept of truth and the concept of justification are quite different, though they are related in obvious ways; just as the concept of moral rightness and the concept of justifiability to others are quite different, though also related. The relation, roughly speaking, is that truths are often justifiable and so are right actions; but this innocuous observation hardly amounts to a full-fledged theory of truth or rightness. So I would ask Scanlon: does he want to adopt a parallel "contractualist" conception of truth, and if not, how does he explain the difference between truth and rightness in respect of their relation to the notion of interpersonal justification? (The same question can be asked about the logical notion of validity as applied to arguments. Is validity to be explained in terms of interpersonal agreement? I doubt that Scanlon would say yes,

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since it is so implausible to suggest that logical rules of inference are valid because they are interpersonally justifiable; but then we need to know how reasons deriving from considerations of logical validity differ from reasons deriving from considerations of moral rightness.)

Scanlon wishes to provide an account of the importance of moral reasons, and of the special authority that they have in our practical decisions. Why is failing to be moved by sound moral reasons so grievous a fault? Wherein lies the deep defect of the amoralist or the immoralist? This is a crucial question for any moral theory, and Scanlon believes that his account scores well on this test. Appealing to John Stuart Mill's notion of being "in unity with our fellow creatures," he suggests that moral reasons are uniquely important because the failure or the refusal to be swayed by them is a rejection of the ideal of harmony with others. Estrangement is the result of rejecting moral reasons, since such reasons essentially involve dialogue with others: if I will not justify or cannot justify my actions to you, then I show that I fail to see why the justifiability of my actions to others should be of any importance.

This account is unpersuasive. As Scanlon recognizes, we often judge that morality requires us to be out of unity with our fellows, and their obduracy in the face of sound moral argument is no count against the rightness of our reasons. (Anyone who has been a moral vegetarian or a Biblical prophet knows about this.) Here Scanlon must appeal again to the notion of ideal justifiability, but this effectively surrenders the idea that morality necessarily involves unity with others—actual unity, I mean. For what is the point of unity with purely hypothetical others? I would say that the importance of the moral prohibition against murder, and hence its power as a motivating reason, has nothing intrinsically to do with the idea that I need to justify this prohibition to others. It owes its power to the consideration that murder is an especially bad thing because life is an especially valuable thing. Morality owes its importance in our motivational structure to the importance of the values that it enshrines. It is not a matter of respecting the opinions of others, actual or ideal.

Scanlon might reply that his account of moral importance is correct *for him*, that this is why he takes moral reasons so seriously. At a number of points in the book he appeals to such first-person considerations: "I myself accept contractualism largely because the account it offers of moral motivation is phenomenologically more accurate than any other I know of.

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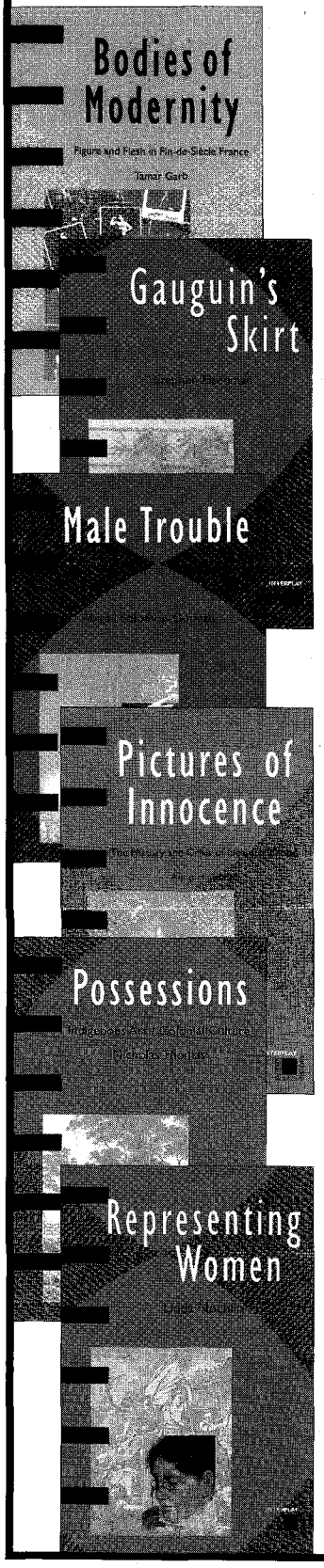

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It captures very accurately my sense of the reasons that ground and shape my thinking about central questions of right and wrong." And again: "The contractualist view I have presented appeals to me because it offers an account of a central part of morality that fits with our, or at least my, moral experience—that is to say, with my understanding both of the content of moral requirements and of the reasons supporting their authority." Well, it doesn't fit *my* phenomenology; nor, I think, does it fit the moral concepts that we actually have.

In any case, this seems like an oddly self-verifying way to argue: contractualism fits Scanlon's moral phenomenology because he believes it, but it evidently doesn't fit the phenomenology of divine command theorists or utilitarians or natural rights theorists. Scanlon must resort to such a feeble way of defending his view because otherwise it is hard to see what solid basis it has. He insists that we should believe that judgments of right and wrong involve judgments of communal justifiability. But why? What recommends this view? At the core of Scanlon's long book there is a yawning gap where some kind of argument ought to be—hence his rather desperate appeal to his own phenomenology. There is really no direct argument for the theory at all, not even much argument against other theories.

WHAT I THINK is prompting Scanlon, though you would be hard pressed to find this stated in the text, is an old ambition in moral philosophy: the yearning to find a non-moral foundation for morality. The contractualist formula has the appearance of something that promises to derive the moral notions of right and wrong from the non-moral notions of justification, agreement, and the "regulation of behavior." We will then not need to take moral values as primitive; we can build up to them from intrinsically non-moral notions. And in this way we can reply to skeptics about morality, by arguing that morality is really just these three non-moral notions in disguise. What really is the point of contractualism, unless it is part of such a reductionist program? The reply that it answers to Scanlon's phenomenology is no answer to this question. For other people's phenomenologies suggest other answers.

I have been very critical of Scanlon's central theory, but I do not want to give the impression that his book is not admirable in many ways. There is an excellent chapter explaining why reasons cannot be reduced to desires: desires figure as reasons only when satisfying them subserves some value or other, and many reasons have nothing intrinsically to do with desires. He also argues convincingly that not everything of value is something we should be trying to promote (what he calls the teleological view of value): it shows no respect for the value of friendship to try to maximize its occurrence, as if one could drop two old friends for the sake of making ten new ones and claim to value friendship. And Scanlon has a fine discussion of lying and deception, in which he concludes that it is morally wrong to allow people to form expectations about one's future actions that one has no intention of fulfilling, even if one tells no direct lies about this.

Yet the main contractualist thrust of Scanlon's book seems to me not to shed any light on morality at all, and only obscures the issues. The germ of truth in it is simply that what is morally right is what is morally defensible, which is hardly an earth-shattering claim. The rest is excess baggage and confusion. It is puzzling to me how Scanlon could have clung to a theory with such obvious flaws for so long. Is this a case of becoming attached to a theory in callow youth and then finding oneself committed to it and not being able to let go? I am also puzzled as to why the obvious objections I have made were not urged on Scanlon over the years, as I assume they were not. What hindered critics from pressing such objections? That he is a nice guy, that the view sounds more complicated and daunting than it is, that he is highly intelligent, that he is from Harvard? Whatever it was, it shouldn't have been. ■

The Baby

By MARK POLIZZOTTI

Dreaming With His Eyes Open: A Life of Diego Rivera by Patrick Marnham

(Knopf, 350 pp., $35)

IN 1948, IN virtually the last of his many self-portraits, the sixty-two-year-old Diego Rivera painted himself as a small child, holding hands with Death and surrounded by many of the real and mythical figures who had accompanied him through his life. The fresco is called *Dream of a Sunday Afternoon in the Alameda*, and Rivera's self-depiction in it is perhaps the most apposite image of his career. As Patrick Marnham shows in this engaging new biography of Mexico's greatest muralist, Rivera fully deserved his frequent characterization as a precocious, selfish, but somehow lovable child—"*un bébé monstrueux mais bien sympathique*," as the philosopher Elie Faure called him.

Rivera conducted much of his life, like a child, in tranquil ignorance of the consequences that his actions and his contradictions could wreak. Not one of his five marriages or numerous relationships went unaccompanied by multiple infidelities. His lifelong identification with Communism did not prevent him from courting the patronage of Fords and Rockefellers. Despite his use of Mexican tradition and history in his work, he seized every opportunity to leave the country, often returning only under duress. Even his celebrated autobiography, *My Art, My Life*, notable for its almost painful candor, is in fact an intricate weave of fabulations and myths, "the legend of [an] 'infant socialist and atheist' who held the same opinions all his life"—whereas Rivera's actual positions seemed to shift as opportunity, or whimsy, dictated.

This is the first full-scale biography in several decades of this oversized figure, and it is arguably the first book ever to present Rivera's true, unvarnished history. *The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera* (1963), the account by Marnham's main predecessor Bertram Wolfe, a friend and former political ally of Rivera's, benefited and suffered from the writer's closeness to his subject. But Marnham's concern is to sort out and to verify the facts. The drawback is that this same concern sometimes leads him to miss the grand drama that was also central to Rivera's story.

Rivera was larger than life in virtually every respect, from his legendary girth to his enormous appetite for women to the vast frescoes on which he projected allegories of his own existence in the guise of political propaganda. Whatever space

MARK POLIZZOTTI is writing a book about Arthur Rimbaud.

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he occupied, he filled as completely as possible; and, with the instincts of the truly voracious, he was also superbly adept at removing obstructions. Marnham recounts an episode early in Rivera's career as a muralist in which the artist cannily out-maneuvered his fellow painters, first to monopolize most of the available wall panels, then to have the others' work destroyed to make more room for his own. The back-stabbing was repulsive, but so superior were Rivera's productions that, in the final account, our only regret is that his colleagues were "left in possession of even [their] small portion of wall."

He was born in 1886, during the so-called Porfiriato, the thirty-five-year reign of the autocratic Porfirio Díaz—a period that Marnham evokes with an appropriate dose of black humor, and that is best reflected in the macabre, surrealistic cartoons of J.G. Posada. Almost from the start, Rivera's will to power began exerting itself (at least as he later told it), in example after example of "the little General" conquering the strictures and the small-mindednesses of the adult world. In one legendary episode, the child Diego, a diminutive Antichrist in the temple, mounted the altar of the local church and began haranguing the worshippers,

> warning them to give no more money to the priest and explaining that an old man could not sit on a cloud in the sky since it was in contradiction with the law of gravity. While the ladies in the congregation began to scream and a verger doused him in holy water, the priest came into the church in vestments and declared that the child was Satan incarnate. After a dramatic confrontation the six-year-old Rivera seized the priest's candlestick and drove him out of the church.

If the story sounds apocryphal, still it shows Rivera's gift for the inflated gesture (even if many of these incidents were embellished after the fact), and also the interest in scientific theory, with its attendant skepticism, that he retained throughout his life. Appropriately enough, the twin nicknames that Rivera's female guardians gave him as a child were "the Engineer" (from his early fascination with railroads) and—no explanation needed—"the Wretch."

The church episode also shows that Rivera was nothing if not a master self-publicist, a man with a keen instinct for reaching his audience. Murals, almost by

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Diego Rivera, "Mandrake," 1939

definition, are public and publicly sponsored works, requiring a great deal of space and capital. Perhaps the most signal aspect of Rivera's genius was that he could so often advance even highly controversial positions while getting others, even those most opposed to his causes, to meet both these requirements.

His first patron, as it would be many times in the future, was the Mexican state, in the years before the Porfiriato gave way to the Revolution of 1911. Fresh out of art school, having distinguished himself as a student of outstanding promise, Rivera was awarded a government grant to study in Europe, where he would spend the next fourteen years of his life. He settled in Spain, and then headed north to Paris in 1909, where he quickly fell into the ferment of Europe's artistic capital. It was not long before he was a familiar sight in the cafés of Montparnasse, his "large and heavy, almost savage" appearance earning him the nickname "the genial cannibal" (a possible reference to his self-proclaimed, and no doubt spurious, habit of dining on female cadavers during his student days in Mexico City).

While Rivera's first canvases from that period were painted in standard Symbolist or Post-Impressionist style, by 1913 he had shifted to Cubism. It appealed to his desire for a "scientific art"; and in the years before World War I, even more importantly, Cubism was the most commercially viable style for a young artist to adopt. The switch paid off commercially (if not artistically), earning Rivera notoriety, and increased exposure, and a contract with the much-touted dealer Léonce Rosenberg. It also gained him contacts with a number of up-and-coming artists, as well as a somewhat acidic friendship with the already formidable Picasso—a sure sign that the Mexican expatriate was making it. His actual production, however, remained more promise than fulfillment, a series of aesthetically correct but undistinguished landscapes and portraits—the main advantage of Cubist portraits being "that the same face could, if necessary, be attributed to different subjects." Otherwise, Rivera's success in Paris seems to have rested more on his haunts and his habits than on his output.

Finally, after four years, Rivera wrote off Cubism as "trivia and nonsense," deciding that a more realistic approach was better suited to what he wanted to say—though what that might be wasn't yet clear to him. It was not until a few years later, in early

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1921, that Rivera discovered his true medium, when at the suggestion of Elie Faure (and this time with funding from the post-Revolutionary Mexican government) he traveled to Italy to see the frescoes of Giotto—a brief but crucial stage in his development, to which Marnham gives only cursory treatment. He returned to Paris that spring, just long enough to wrap up his affairs and book passage back to Mexico. He was thirty-five years old and had precious little to show for his long exile abroad. As Marnham writes, Rivera had "lived exactly half his time and painted almost nothing that would be remembered."

IF THE MEXICO to which Rivera returned was no longer the place that he had left fourteen years earlier, neither was it the place that he would celebrate in much of his work from this point on. By 1921, the ideals of the Revolution had already been discarded, and the romantic figures of Emiliano Zapata and Pancho Villa were replaced by a succession of brutally self-serving generals. Still, for his first decade in the country and more, Rivera (in Marnham's words) "passed much of his time and devoted most of his energy to the assumption that [the Revolution] was, on the contrary, in the process of being realized."

What Mexico did give Rivera, regardless of the hard political realities, was a cultural context in which to embed the grand myth that would henceforth become his life's work. This myth was made partly of self-projection (Rivera himself appears in many of his frescoes, as do a number of the women who were close to him) and partly of a freshly conceived fascination with the indigenous culture of the Mexican Indians. It also contained a certain portion of leftist political fervor—a calculated ardor, enough to be daring without alienating his more conservative patrons.

Rivera's use of political motifs, arguably the most famous and memorable aspect of his work, is in fact no less a part of his personal myth than the self-portraits or the autobiographical allegories. In his vision, Mexico after the Revolution retained all the vigor, the promise, and the conviction of its formative years. Even today, these murals powerfully evoke a country forever young, facing the future with calm assurance. The images might be overly didactic, as in the iconic portrait of *Agrarian Leader Zapata* leading his horse, done in 1931, or the faces of Marx, Lenin, and Trotsky in the murals for the New Workers School in 1933, or the serene young woman (Frida Kahlo) handing out rifles to workers in *Insurrection*, done in 1928. Or they might be as elemental as the vast Earth goddess who dominates the frescoes of 1926–27 for Chapingo Chapel. Whether he was depicting historical dramas, contemporary events, or picturesque scenes of Indian life, Rivera managed to convey a twentieth-century political message with the force and the didacticism, and many of the techniques, of medieval religious propaganda. As Anthony Blunt once put it, "if medieval art was the Bible of the Illiterate, Rivera's frescoes are the *Kapital* of the Illiterate."

THE TROUBLE WITH the mythic view of life is that the more events contradict it, the more divorced one's vision becomes from one's inspiration. Rivera, who already had a romanticized view of the Revolution when he returned to Mexico, invested a heroic but increasingly quixotic effort into harmonizing the utopian promise of a Marxist-Leninist paradise with the ever more dissonant claims of a flagrantly corrupt regime. As Marnham observes, it did not take long for him to start moving "away from reality and towards the political dreamland where he was to execute so much of his future work."

As a political activist himself, Rivera was utterly inept. Bertram Wolfe, a member of the Mexican Communist Party's Central Committee, noted that Rivera's long digressions at party meetings about his own fictitious exploits wasted vast amounts of time; and that when he did turn his mind to political analysis, he was often "completely, overwhelmingly wrong.... When his fantasy elaborated things in the wrong direction, the Committee, swayed by his eloquent verisimilitude, was so far wrong that they might as well have been laying plans for work in another country or on another planet." Nor did Rivera's convictions keep him from seeking widely publicized commissions from prominent figureheads of North American capitalism, such as Henry Ford (for whom he decorated the Garden Court in Detroit) and John D. Rockefeller.

The story of Rivera's misadventures in 1933 in Rockefeller Center, where his inclusion of Lenin's face in one of the murals offended the building's owners and eventually led to the work's destruction, has long been a staple of modern art history, a comic-book saga of generous conviction set against the oppressive censorship of the Rockefeller machine. But Marnham's more level-headed rendition presents something no doubt closer to the truth: the sad, instructive tale of a tendentious fabulist discovering that even his considerable charm and ambition were no match for the impersonal business interests of "Gringolandia."

Myth or reality, Rivera's blend of historical imagery, political fantasy, and individual panache soon made him Mexico's most prominent painter. By the late 1920s, writes Marnham, "he had established a virtual monopoly in the field of official fresco; one by one his fellow artists had been excluded.... Rivera was now the sole purveyor of official art, enjoying the same privileges as a state painter in a totalitarian regime, but with the difference that the cynical Mexican regime was happy to let him paint what he wanted." For the next several years, until his miscalculations abroad and his run-ins with influential party members at home began to chip away at these privileges, Rivera mined his hegemony for all the benefits it could yield.

ONE OF THE MOST BLATANT of these benefits, from Rivera's viewpoint, was the seemingly endless availability of impressionable and willing consorts. "Capitalizing on his fame," Marnham notes, "Rivera seduced a stream of young women ... who came to study his work or act as his assistants. Many of these visitors succumbed to the flattery of being invited to pose for Rivera." Already, in departing Paris for Mexico in 1921, he had left behind a wife (the Russian painter Angelina Beloff) and a mistress (her friend Marevna Vorobev), both of whom had borne children by him—inaugurating a pattern of seduction and abandonment that would persist for the rest of his life. Too much the spoiled child to shoulder the responsibilities of adulthood, pampered and mothered by the women who loved him, Rivera found it impossible to deny himself a potential conquest. Nor, despite his siring of four children, could he abide paternity, and in each case he stepped away from his wife's or his lover's pregnancy by indulging in new affairs.

Indeed, Rivera's amorous history from 1922 onward reads like a bad burlesque. The year after his return to Mexico, while still promising to send for both Angelina and Marevna, he married a young Mexican model named Guadalupe Marin, who bore him two further children over the next five years—by which time he had embarked on an intense affair with the Italian photographer and Soviet operative Tina Modotti. In 1929, he married his third and best-known wife, the Mexican painter Frida Kahlo, and then, after their divorce, remarried her in 1940. The year following Kahlo's death in 1954, he married his dealer, Emma Hurtado, and the year after that he went to live with his former lover Dolores Olmedo. And there were also hundreds of other dalliances, with women ranging from models and assistants to

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Paulette Goddard, Louise Nevelson, and Kahlo's younger sister Christina.

Of all these adventures and entanglements, the most significant, of course, was the marriage to Frida Kahlo, and Marnham takes great pains to understand the complicated logic of this now-legendary couple and, more importantly, to clear away the tendentious interpretation and the misinformation that partisans of both sides have promulgated over the years. He makes some particularly pertinent remarks concerning the longstanding view of their marriage as "sadistic" and one-sided, a view encouraged by Rivera's own admission that "the more I loved [a woman], the more I wanted to hurt her."

While hardly denying that Rivera could be petulant, cruel, and "monumentally selfish"—Elie Faure's "*bébé monstrueux*" twenty years on—Marnham also points out that both Rivera and Kahlo indulged freely in extramarital affairs, often with the other's tolerance, and that each gained something essential from the other. The "curious mixture of neglect and obsession" that Rivera demonstrated toward his wife inspired not only great pain, but also much of Kahlo's work, and to a large extent her self-image. "You too know that all my eyes see, all I touch with myself, from any distance, is Diego," she confided to a friend; and in her diary she wrote, "Diego my child ... Diego my mother, Diego my father ... Diego = me."

FOR HIS PART, Rivera found in Kahlo the perfect helpmeet for the construction of his myth. She shared his political illusions; she famously dressed in Tehuana garb (though she was of German-Jewish parentage), molding herself to her husband's ongoing fascination with Mexican Indian culture; and, most important of all, she allowed him to indulge fully in his fantasy of unending childhood. Rivera, Marnham says flatly, "became [Kahlo's] baby and she became his mother, bathing him regularly and even filling the tub with rubber ducks." Kahlo could not have a child, and Rivera could not help acting like one. Between them, they forged a strange but workable bond, made of mutual suffering and gentleness and understanding. Of all Rivera's lovers, writes Marnham, "Frida was the only woman who managed to pierce [his] elephant-hide balloon of egoism." When she died in 1954, a probable suicide, Rivera called it "the most tragic day of my life.... Too late I realized that the most wonderful part of my life had been my love for Frida."

In the remaining three years before his own death, Rivera continued to work, mainly on easel paintings, and drafted the verbal component of his mythical edifice, his autobiography *My Art, My Life*, which Marnham calls "the biographical equivalent of the magical realism school of fiction." He died on November 24, 1957, leaving behind instructions for his ashes to be mixed with Kahlo's and installed in the vast Aztec-style temple that he had built for himself. But the Mexican government, coopting the muralist's legend once and for all, made even his remains a public work, and chose instead to inter him in their Rotunda of Illustrious Men.

DREAMING WITH HIS EYES OPEN, as its title suggests, takes a lucid and clear-sighted view of the Rivera myth, extracting the truth from the many embellishments of it, both Rivera's and those of others. It presents the essential facts of a long and eventful existence in remarkably economical fashion, which is a rare accomplishment these days. And along the way it provides some fine insights into Mexican culture and history, into the artistic world of the first three decades of the century, and into the complexities of muralistic technique.

What the book does not do, despite the drama of Rivera's life, is tell a genuinely dramatic story. Many episodes are detailed here, but too often their protagonists are made no more accessible than the oversized but two-dimensional versions of them that Rivera frequently placed in his murals. *Dreaming With His Eyes Open* is easily and often enjoyably read, but it has a peculiarly unrealized quality. Perhaps this is owed to Marnham's ambivalence toward his subject: he admires Rivera, but he does not seem to like him. More to the point, he refuses in the end to see any larger pattern in the vivid chaos of Rivera's life, thereby denying his narrative an overall shape.

"Rivera was a man who tried in his work to make sense of his existence and who failed to make that sense," Marnham writes in conclusion. "His life had no more coherence or meaning than his last great fresco [*Dream of a Sunday Afternoon in the Alameda*]. But it had the complexity and imagination and color and passion of that picture." But all lives are lived to some extent in a more or less vain attempt to make sense. We are too close to the fabric of our own to see the pattern we have woven. The biographer's task, and his opportunity, is to see that fabric at a distance and from a variety of angles, to discern the coherence and the meaning of a subject's life in a way not apparent to the person living it, and to shape the narrative of it in a way that will make the coherence apparent and vivid to others.

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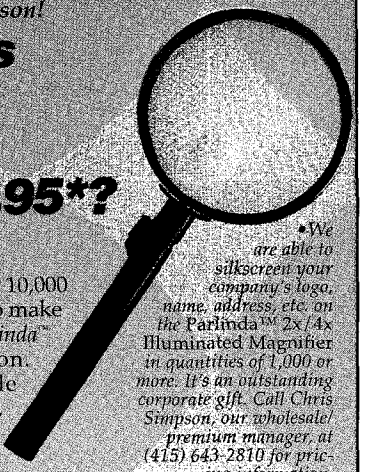

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that Marnham sets in opposition to coherence is precisely where that coherence lies. Like the reborn country that produced him, Rivera lived in a state of self-reinvention, fusing a variety of ancient and modern cultural influences, leaving himself open to the wonderment and the power of constant renewal. His grand myth seems largely to have been a lifelong quest for a return to childhood, a privileged state of perpetual self-gratification in which "the Engineer" and "the Wretch" could co-exist, endlessly forgiven and always looking forward to more. While this made the man reprehensible in many ways, it endowed his best work—the folkloric *Day of the Dead* (1924), the murals for Chapingo Chapel and the Detroit Institute, the meditative peasant woman bearing calla lilies in *Flower Day* (1925)—with a timeless energy and humanity that reaches far beyond the dated references to Lenin or 1930s-style industrialism. (The large-scale retrospective that premiered in February at the Cleveland Museum of Art amply demonstrates just how vital these images remain six decades after the fact.)

It is no accident that Rivera's penultimate mural, *Dream of a Sunday Afternoon*, shows him as a little boy, fearlessly and trustingly holding hands with Death, surrounded by a host of protective figures. He would follow this path to the very end. His last mural, painted in 1953, shows an Indian woman giving birth to a newborn who "bears a striking resemblance to the infant Rivera." And in a self-perpetuating cycle of regression, regeneration, and absolution, the figures of the midwives helping him forever into the world are modeled on the artist's own daughter. ■

Cash and Citizenship

By CASS R. SUNSTEIN

The Stakeholder Society by Bruce Ackerman and Anne Alstott

(Yale University Press, 296 pp., $26)

OF THE NEW DEAL'S many programs, Social Security may be the most impressive achievement. Its impact has been enormous, greatly reducing the problem of poverty among the elderly. At the same time, it has become a large-scale symbol, an institution, even a sacred cow. Three of President Roosevelt's masterstrokes guaranteed this result. First, Roosevelt linked Social Security taxes to work, making the program appear to be an employment-based insurance program rather than what it clearly is: a system of economic redistribution. Second, Roosevelt made the program universal in coverage, not limited to the poor or the needy; this guaranteed wide rather than narrow support. Third, Roosevelt ensured that the program would operate, not in theory but in practice, as a kind of intergenerational transfer, from those currently working to those who are too old or too sick to work, or who have retired voluntarily or through compulsion.

The consequence of all this has been that America provides quite well for old people, or at least for those old people who have had a long-term connection to the workforce, or whose spouses have had such a connection; but the nation does much less well for children, teenagers, and young adults. It should be no wonder that, according to recent data, 11 percent of people over sixty-five live in poverty, whereas 20 percent of children, and 18 percent of adults between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four, live in poverty.

Bruce Ackerman and Anne Alstott aim partly to follow, but mostly to renovate, and even to reverse, Roosevelt's course. They argue on behalf of a universalistic program, one that is open to all and every bit as ambitious as Social Security, but they emphatically reject the requirement of a workplace connection. Their program is tied to citizenship, not to work. Even more dramatically, Ackerman and Alstott seek to redistribute not from young to old, but in exactly the opposite direction. One of the distinctive features of their proposal involves the kind of liberalism that they mean to revive. This is an emphatically Rooseveltian liberalism—sharply opposed to identity politics and interest-group maneuvering, eager to use the national government to promote both liberty and equality, aspiring to universalism, and seeking to create social programs that are available to all rather than limited to the poor.

Their proposal is startlingly simple. Upon reaching the age of eighteen, every American who has graduated from high school, and avoided significant criminal activity, would receive a flat grant of $80,000. All the recipients of this grant would be "stakeholders." The $80,000 "stakes" would be financed through a 2 percent annual wealth tax. Now you may think, and it is reasonable to think, that the idea is quite preposterous. But Ackerman and Alstott have convinced me at least that it is heuristically interesting, and that those who reject it, or even find it daft, should take their argument as an occasion for thinking of other methods for giving all Americans, including young adults, a decent chance in life. Ackerman and Alstott's immodest proposal certainly raises fundamental issues of principle and policy.

THE BOOK IS an unusual mixture of political theory and policy analysis. The authors' starting point is the ideal of "free and equal citizenship," an ideal that they mean to oppose to two alternatives: libertarianism, requiring government to keep its hands off, and the cult of the market, embodied in the (demonstrably false) notion that a rising economic tide lifts all boats. Free and equal citizens, they insist, require equality of opportunity. And equal opportunity is regularly violated in practice, as millions of young people find themselves with little hope owing to some combination of family background and policy failures.

This is a problem, as they rightly say, for both liberty and equality, not for equality alone. It is intolerable for the "economic starting points" of the next generation to "be entirely shaped by their parents' successes and failures." By drawing attention to free and equal citizenship, Ackerman and Alstott also aim to focus people on something other than the welfare state. "Our first concern is not with safety nets but with starting points; not with misfortune, but with opportunity; not with welfare, but with economic citizenship."

Against libertarians, Ackerman and Alstott insist that free and equal citizenship is not an effort to insert government where it did not exist before. Even the most apparently independent among us has benefited from an extensive (and expensive) government apparatus, which protects us against criminal violence and safeguards our rights of private property. This point casts the idea of "stakeholding" in a fresh light. Because of "the continuing dependence of the wealthy on the cooperation of their fellow citizens, stakeholding does not involve coercive 'gifts' to strangers." And so it becomes necessary to reject the "banal" opposition between the individual and the community. A system

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of stakeholding promotes individual freedom at the same time that it fosters community, through a mechanism that is both universal and concrete.

> As members of the rising generation come forward to stake their claims, they will be doing more than affirming their individual right to shape their own particular destinies. They will also be affirming their identity as citizens of a great country devoted to freedom and equality.... Except for the most hardened cynics, this will lead to a deep and sustaining loyalty to the country that made stakeholding a concrete reality.

This would also help to eliminate what is now emerging, a "brittle three-class structure: a lower class condemned to dead-end jobs and frequent unemployment, an upper class of professionals enjoying fabulous prosperity, and a vast middle class increasingly embittered by continuing economic stagnation."

ACKERMAN AND ALSTOTT believe that a "stake" would produce many desirable effects. Most important, the stake would give young adults more freedom and also produce a degree of equality among them. "Our present arrangements impose an unnecessary moral dilemma: just at the moment we expect young adults to make responsible life-shaping decisions, we do not afford them the resources that they need to take a responsible long-term perspective." By promising a large grant with conditions attached, the program would also give young people strong incentives to finish high school and to avoid crime.

Since the well-being of children depends largely on the well-being of their parents, who are usually young adults, stakeholding should benefit children, too. Any young couple would have combined stakes of at least $160,000, a sum that, if invested, could be used to buy good education and good health for children. Special benefits would flow to minority group members and women. At present, two-thirds of all households have net financial wealth; but only 39 percent of African American households have net financial wealth. In this way the stake would operate, in practice, as a substantial benefit to African Americans. Women would be helped too, for they would automatically be given a degree of financial independence from their spouses, thus enabling them to make choices far more freely.

Ackerman and Alstott explore how their program would affect people at various places in the economic hierarchy. Perhaps the biggest effect would be on the poor, and especially on people who are poor and young. "For those growing up in the ghettos of America, stakeholding will provide a beacon of hope: stay in school and graduate, and you will not be forgotten." A teenager in a poor family might be able to go to a decent out-of-state college and ultimately end up with job offers and without college debt. Or imagine a young working-class couple, both with a high school education: if they invest their money for seven years, they will, in their mid-twenties, have well over $170,000 in the bank, which they might use to buy a small house, or to finance college training for one of the spouses, or to ensure against disaster in the event of a lost job or a medical emergency.

For those without college education in a difficult job market, they continue, "stakeholding will provide a priceless buffer against the predictable shocks of the marketplace. A temporary economic setback will no longer quickly spiral into a devastating loss of self-confidence or a grim period of deprivation." A couple higher in the economic scale, but also in their mid-twenties, might have spent $30,000 on college tuition and living expenses, and perhaps another $15,000 on a honeymoon trip to Asia. If the stakes were invested, they could have $125,000 left, and that amount could be used to start their own business. If they are having marital difficulties, they can make choices, singly or together, with a decent economic cushion.

ANY PROGRAM OF THIS KIND would require attention to a lot of details, to put it mildly. In the authors' design, serious criminal activity should result in a diminished and perhaps forfeited stake. Only high school graduates would be eligible, a restriction designed to increase the incentive to stay in school. Under current census figures, this would eliminate only about 15 percent of young Americans from the program, a figure that would likely diminish as a result of the "carrot" provided by the stake. All other Americans at the age of eighteen would be permitted to claim their stakes as a matter of right, simply by submitting a diploma and other necessary documents to the stakeholding office. Actual payments would not begin until the age of twenty-one, with one exception: it would be possible to take out annual sums for the single purpose of financing higher education.

Ackerman and Alstott recognize that all this would be quite expensive. The total cost in 1997 would have been about $255 billion. Initially, the necessary funds would come from an annual wealth tax of 2 percent, a tax from which 59 percent of households are exempted by virtue of a proposed $80,000 exemption for every American. The result would be that more than 90 percent of the funding would come from the wealth tax on the top 20 percent.

In the long run, however, stakeholders would be asked, before death, to pay back the $80,000, with interest, into the stakeholder fund. The enforcement mechanism would be the estate tax: subject to a $50,000 exemption, people would not be permitted to give money to their children or other heirs unless and until they have paid back their stake. In an interesting variation on the Social Security program, this is an idea of "liberal trusteeship," in which each person acts, in his individual capacity, as a trustee for the future.

What if some or many stakeholders dissipate their stakes? And what if the very obligation to pay back the stake leads people to spend all their money before they die? Ackerman and Alstott are alert to these anxieties. If the payback requirement turns out not to work, it may be necessary to impose a "trusteeship tax," through which stakeholders are required to pay a supplementary amount during their lifetimes so as to guarantee the solvency of the fund.

One of the authors' most general goals is to shift the focus of redistributive policies away from both welfare ("secularized charity") and the workplace. In addition

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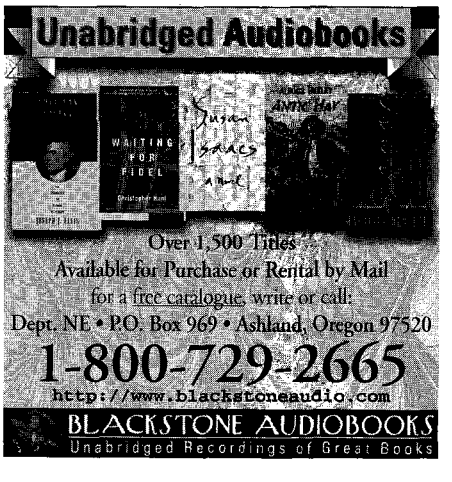
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to the stakeholding system, they propose a quite substantial change in the Social Security system, now funded by the steeply regressive payroll tax. Echoing a widespread (and correct) view, they contend that the "insurance" rubric is quite misleading, a form of fraud really, concealing an intergenerational transfer in which wealthy people pay disproportionately little. Ackerman and Alstott would replace Social Security with a system of old-age pensions not tied to work at all. They would fund these pensions with a new progressive tax, by which all Americans would pay a certain sum into the treasury (from a minimum of $380 to a maximum of $3,800).

An obvious question is how the stakeholder proposal compares to alternative proposals, many of which are getting a serious hearing in the current burst of more creative liberal thinking about social policy. Ackerman and Alstott reject substantial increases in the minimum wage on the ground that this would have harmful consequences for employment. They have more sympathy for the economist Edmund Phelps's recent suggestion of a substantial government wage subsidy for low-wage employees. Phelps seeks a dramatic expansion in the earned income tax credit; he would have the government ensure a decent minimum for all low-income workers by adding dollars to market wages. Ackerman and Alstott urge that stakeholding would be a lot better insofar as it is less outcome-oriented and tied to citizenship rather than the workplace. They also object that Phelps's plan continues in the unfortunate, non-universalist path of offering secularized charity to those at the bottom.

As compared with Phelps's proposal, Ackerman and Alstott much like the idea of a basic income guarantee for all (seriously discussed as a "negative income tax" or a "family allowance" in the 1970s by Milton Friedman, James Tobin, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, and others)—as in a system in which every adult would get a specified annual cash payment (say, $4,000) regardless of income and wealth. In their view, this idea should be given serious consideration since it "puts the emphasis on freedom." But stakeholding has the large comparative advantage of allowing owners to decide whether to take an annuity or instead to use the money in other ways. In their view, an annual cash grant is a primitive and paternalistic version of stakeholding, one that constricts freedom by comparison.

AN IMMODEST PROPOSAL, indeed. How should we evaluate a program of this magnitude? As Ackerman and Alstott emphasize, their approach is not altogether original. Thomas Paine suggested a much smaller program of just this kind. Paine said that every citizen, male or female, should have a right to fifteen pounds sterling "when arrived at the age of twenty-one years ... and also the sum of ten pounds per annum, during life, to every person now living of the age of fifty years, and to all others as they shall arrive at that age." The G.I. Bill of Rights gave something like a "stake" to returning veterans. Alaska has created a "permanent fund," based on the revenues from North Slope oil, which distributes about $1,000 annually to every citizen of Alaska. When Margaret Thatcher privatized publicly owned housing in England, she allowed citizens to buy their own homes at bargain rates, thus creating a far larger property-holding citizenry. In an extremely successful experiment, Prime Minister Vaclav Klaus of the Czech Republic did something similar in privatizing companies in the aftermath of Communism.

But this proposal is far more ambitious. It confronts, for a start, obvious political obstacles. There seems little chance that Congress would, in the foreseeable future, impose a 2 percent wealth tax or give $80,000 to every eighteen-year-old. And any large-scale redistributive scheme faces another obvious problem. Since a new bureaucracy would be necessary, the government would have to tax more money than it would give out, with a substantial remainder going to those who implement the program. And Ackerman and Alstott give insufficient attention to the likelihood that millions of stakeholders would not pay back their shares. If the government has an $80,000 lien on your money at time of death, why not spend it instead? In all probability, government would have to rely on a "stakeholder tax" that people would have to pay during their lifetimes.

BUT ACKERMAN AND ALSTOTT'S proposal provokes two more significant, and more damaging, objections. The first involves the question of whether young adults can be considered sufficiently responsible to be given $80,000 by American taxpayers. The second has to do with identifying the problem to which stakeholding is intended to be the solution.

First, responsibility. People in their early twenties are certainly not children, but many of them would have no idea what to do with an $80,000 windfall. It is likely—actually, it is certain—that many of them would use the money unwisely, some dissipating it on get-rich-quick investment schemes, others increasing their expenditures on alcohol, parties, and drugs, still others using it on exorbitant purchases of various sorts (clothes, vacations, cars). For many young people, the stake would be a predictable occasion for a wasteful form of competition on designated luxury-type goods. Does it make sense for society to create a massive redistributive scheme to subsidize consumption of that sort? Why should wealthy Americans be asked to transfer their resources not to those who are needy or poor, but to millions of eighteen-year-olds, some or many of whom will use the money unwisely or even frivolously?

Ackerman and Alstott have two retorts to this objection. First, they emphasize freedom of choice. If people want to dissipate their stake, shouldn't they be entitled to do so? But this is inadequate. The question is whether the American public should support so large a social program if the consequence, in many cases, is to fund expenditures that really do not improve the beneficiaries' lives. Second, and far more interestingly, Ackerman and Alstott contend that the very existence of a stake would have significant and desirable cultural consequences, in which young people would be taught to treat their stake with a degree of gravity. "The advent of stakeholding will have a revolutionary impact on education in this country. For the first time, high school students will have an intense and practical interest in fundamentals of economic planning. Classes named 'How to Manage Your Stake' will be as eagerly attended as those in driver's education—a universal rite of passage into the real world."

THIS IS CERTAINLY POSSIBLE. But we cannot know to what extent it would be true. Young people like driver's education because they will be able to drive very soon. Would teenagers, who tend to have a notoriously short time horizon, have a similar attitude toward courses specializing in long-term investment? How many students would grab the money and run, or be diverted by a fraudulent or doomed scheme?

Perhaps more troublingly, the automatic grant of $80,000 to young people is likely to make many young adults less inclined to work. People in their late teens and early twenties often work hard, in school or the job market, in order to develop the kinds of skills that will eventually lead to financial reward. Might not an automatic grant of $80,000 remove desirable incentives?

And there are related concerns. If all young adults find themselves with $80,000, it is possible that the beneficiaries would be less the relevant young adults than those who could attract their money. Colleges and universities might

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well respond by raising tuition. (This is why government programs designed to assist college students by subsidizing tuition payments should be taken with many grains of salt; they might just lead to increased tuition, and thus enrich colleges without much helping students.) An important effect of "stakeholding" might be to transfer resources from wealthy individuals to (mostly wealthy) educational institutions—not the best reason for a large-scale redistributive program.

More generally, the existence of $80,000 in the hands of all young adults would likely increase the demand for certain social goods, whose nature cannot easily be predicted in advance. (Restaurants? Vacations? Compact discs? Clothing stores?) The consequence might be to increase the price of those goods, with less favorable results for "stakeholders" than Ackerman and Alstott envisage.

YET THE LARGEST AND most interesting questions have to do with identifying the problem to which Ackerman and Alstott think "stakes" are the solution. Social problems should usually be approached in a well-tailored rather than in blunderbuss fashion, and the idea of stakeholding is a coarsely tailored idea. Is this an anti-poverty program? Most of the beneficiaries would not be poor, and thus it must be asked whether the nation should adopt a program of this kind when most of the beneficiaries would be middle-class or wealthy. In the short term, "stakeholding" would involve a redistribution not from rich to poor, but from those with accumulated wealth to each and every young high school graduate—or, in a striking reversal of Roosevelt's plan, from old to young.

In the long run, Ackerman and Alstott hope that the program will be self-sustaining, as old people pay back their stakes. In this form, the program is less an anti-poverty program than an intergenerational transfer. It is also an automatic government loan without easily enforceable reimbursement obligations—a loan in which young people are given a lot of money and told that they must eventually repay it, but are not really forced to do so, and are thus given strong incentives to use the money on consumption. How much good would this do?

Of course it would help reduce poverty. No young high school graduate will be poor, which would be an important gain. Taken purely as an attack on poverty, however, it would be quite crude. Indeed, the exclusion of people who have not graduated from high school, and who have engaged in significant criminal activity, would impose a disproportionate burden on poor people (and also on African Americans). A really effective anti-poverty program (especially one that had $255 billion to spend) would be concerned with improving early education and job training, and stakeholding would help only indirectly on these counts. Despite Ackerman and Alstott's rhetoric, moreover, this is only ambiguously an equal opportunity program, for it starts too late in life to provide genuinely equal opportunity. Head Start, an intervention directed at educating poor children, seems much better on this count.

Perhaps stakeholding should be seen as an effort to create an incentive to stay in school and to avoid criminal behavior. On these counts it would undoubtedly have some good effects. But if our goal is to keep people in school and to get them to avoid crime, there are probably better and cheaper ways than giving $80,000 to every eighteen-year-old. Why shouldn't states experiment with reasonable, selective cash incentives to sixteen-year-olds in high-crime, high-dropout areas? Why not, say, $1,000 a year for every year of high school after tenth grade? A program of this kind is likely to work at least as well as stakeholding, and it is also much cheaper.

In the end, though, Ackerman and Alstott's fundamental concern is not poverty or education or crime, but the old idea of universal citizenship. They are dismayed not only by unequal opportunity and social desperation, but also by identity politics and social fragmentation. One of their chief goals is to design a program in which each and every American can feel included, in the same way and on the same terms—not because they receive charity, not because of need, and not even because they work, but as a matter of right, and owing only to membership in the nation.

As Roosevelt knew, a system whose beneficiaries include middle-class and wealthy people as well as the poor is likely to have broad political support; any program limited to the poor is likely to stigmatize and to be stigmatized. For Ackerman and Alstott, however, these strictures are less important than the creation of a kind of shared national enterprise, one that is both symbolic and material, and one that would break the dependence of young adults on the fortunes of their parents. "Some will succeed and others will fail, but all will have had a real chance at the pursuit of happiness. And even those who fail will know that they have not deprived their children of a fair opportunity to start again." It is for this reason that they see the new intergenerational transfer—from old to young—as both a symbolic and a material good.

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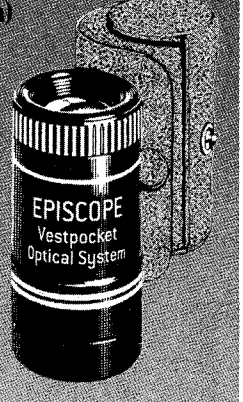

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But what sort of symbol of citizenship is cash? It seems peculiarly materialistic to suggest that people have a "stake," and count as citizens, because and to the extent that they can expect a large pile of money when they turn eighteen. For one thing, the idea would likely have a destructive effect on those who forfeit their stakes because they do not finish high school or commit disqualifying crimes. Indeed, the existence of this sort of stake could have the unfortunate consequence of making the most disadvantaged members of the society feel even more excluded, as quasi-citizens, simply because they have little money.

Ackerman and Alstott are right to insist that citizens deserve to receive benefits of one kind or another from their country. Even the most seemingly independent among us owe their status to a range of emphatically collective institutions. But any purely financial notion of belonging is hard to support. Surely citizenship is best seen as a complex network of benefits and burdens. A vast social effort to constitute citizenship through dollar awards does not send exactly the right signal. (Consider a more modest proposal, one that would cost a lot less, send a better message, and probably do a great deal of good: free health care for everyone under the age of eighteen.)

The risk of unintended bad consequences is far too high to justify an initiative of this magnitude. To the extent that the approach has appeal in principle, it is possible to imagine less massive experiments. Compare, for example, the related but still ambitious step proposed by Senator Robert Kerrey, who would include in Social Security reform a "Kid Save" plan that would put $1,000 into a savings account created at birth, and add $500 annually—an amount that would, with compound interest, give every child $20,000 by the age of twenty-one. Senator Kerrey notwithstanding, this is a period in which liberal reformers tend to think in ways that are both defensive and very small—to preserve some program from right-wing attack, to secure funding for well-entrenched initiatives, to mend or to end affirmative action, to protect interest groups of various kinds, to make incremental changes. Those who reject the idea of stakeholding would do well to use their doubts as the basis for thinking more ambitiously about how to secure the conditions for both equal opportunity and universal citizenship. ■

Hello to All That

By DANIEL AARON

The American Century by Harold Evans with Gail Buckland and Kevin Baker

(Knopf, 710 pp., $50)

HAROLD EVANS, English-born journalist, editor, publisher, and self-described "immigrant" to the United States, is one of a long line of trans-Atlantic commentators who have been looking at Americans (often down their noses) for several hundred years. In 1956, Evans came to the States on a travel grant that allowed him to criss-cross the country and to watch a nation, including its black and Native American minorities, during an election year. Some time later he became an American citizen, fascinated "with the idea of America and its unceasing struggle to achieve its ends." Such a statement hints of Manifest Destiny and National Mission; but the extraordinary burgeoning of the United States, as Evans tells it, had less to do with divine condescension than with a conjunction of happy accidents, historical and physiographical. The majority of Americans, he thinks, adhered to the gospel of "freedom" and "democracy" even when they did not practice it. What they "honored" were "the expectations of prosperity."

The American Century might be said to be a triumphalist reading of the country's "second century." If so, it does not scant the testimony of the defeated, the scorned, and the oppressed, or predict clear sailing for the Ship of State. Evans's Americans are ingenious, brave, flexible, and pragmatic; they are also avaricious, hubristic, and full of "just plain chutzpah." The "saving grace" of American society is its stubborn faith in the future, its restlessness, and its "organic optimism" that never "quite" congeals into complacency.

Not a "history," not a conventional chronicle or a disinterested random survey, and not at all a textbook, *The American Century* is first and foremost an illustrated political essay, a set of tableaux or choreographed historical episodes designed to introduce "new Americans" (and presumably old ones) to the years when the United States exfoliated into an international power. It is also a decade-by-decade account of selected events and people—not just the names enshrined in our national annals, but also those of the now near-anonymous men and women long dissolved into our culture and institutions. Finally, it is a story written without hokum or bias by a "new" American of his adopted country's political development from the end of the Civil War until it had become "the-most-powerful-country-in-the-world."

THE "PLOT" OF Evans's narrative might be boiled down to something like this. America's second century opens with the last great land rush, a stampede into the Indian Territory and the finale of a "perpetual land boom" that was in process for the preceding sixty years. (Evans calls it a "typical American triumph, fired by relentless optimism and self-righteousness, and sustained by an infinite talent for gadgetry.") God's clients—the Carnegies, the Rockefellers, the Morgans, and so on—had begun to harness America's industrial and financial energy, and by 1896 they had crushed the last serious agrarian revolt. In the course of its stumbling but irresistible momentum, the nation almost inadvertently acquires an empire. New immigrants, now largely from southern and eastern Europe, fuel the factories and plants and in the process transform urban politics. It is the age of the "Boss."

"Class war" heats up as the industrial machine roars and sputters through financial crises and depressions, through two hot world wars and a long cold one, and through an unending spate of social convulsions. Although distracted by its political scandals and imperialistic adventures, by Vietnam and Watergate and the rest, by its racial phobias and its ubiquitous Yahoos, the nation is strong and resilient enough to survive its blunders. At the end of its first 200 years, although not cocky or unaware of its vulnerabilities, it takes its freedom and its prosperity pretty much for granted.

In fifteen chapters, Evans has chronologically spanned the century and arranged his cast of characters who made

DANIEL AARON is emeritus professor of English at Harvard University.

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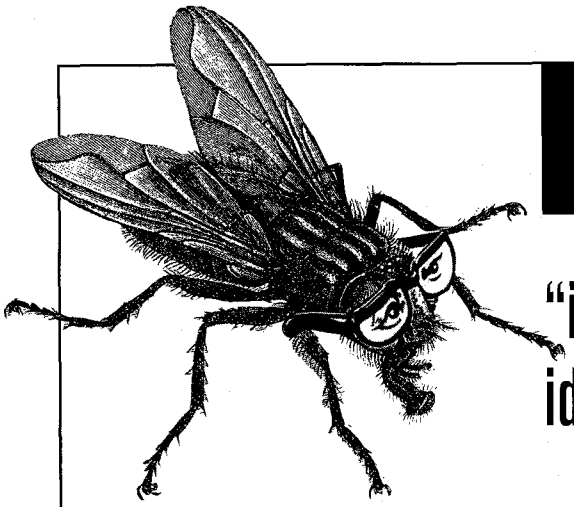

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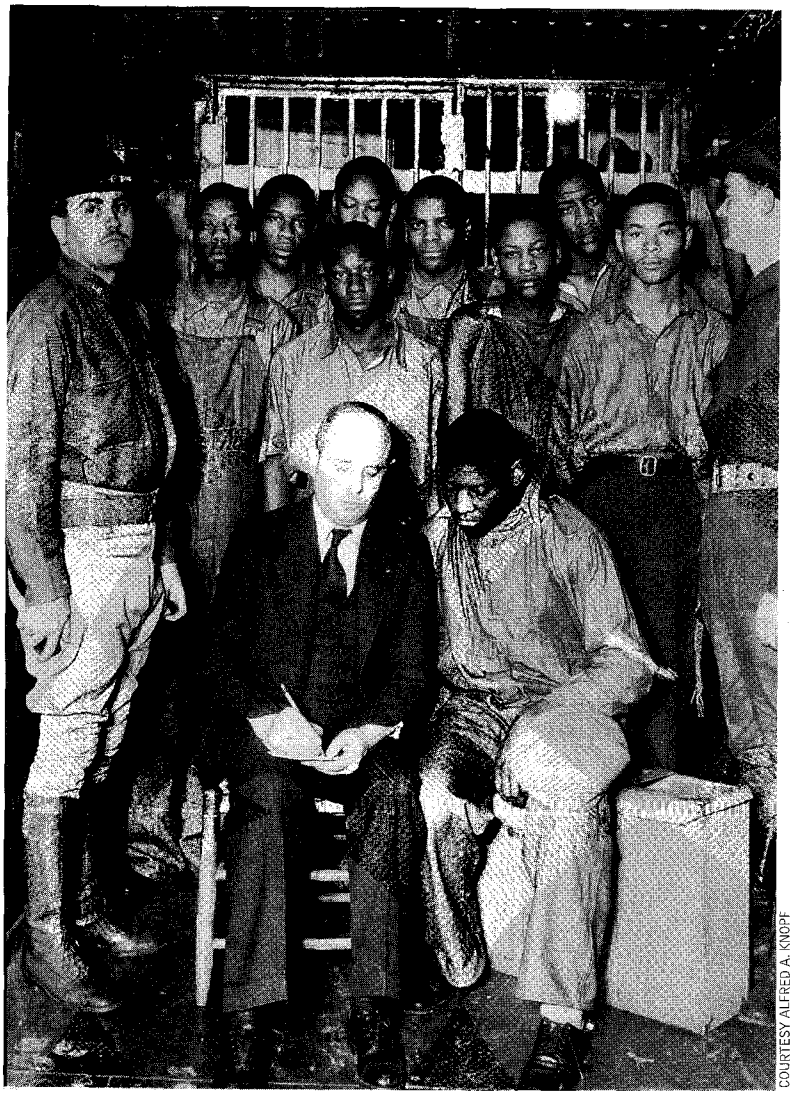
and rode the historical waves. Each chapter is introduced by a ruminative essay on a prescribed topic. Collectively, these essays are a digest of the narrator's guided reading (replete with quotable remarks, substantive and decorative, by scholars and public intellectuals on his wavelength) and his views on the "enduring themes" in American political and social history. Like Arthur Schlesinger Jr., one of his respected sources, Evans is more comfortable in the "vital center" than on the wild ideological frontiers—and, one suspects, more averse to hard-core right-wingers than to political antinomians and cloud-cuckoos. Yet he wears no political badge and rarely tips his hand. Sometimes it is hard to tell why he allots more space to one subject or person than to another, why (to give one example) the "American Mussolini," Al Capone, should bulk larger in his history than the politically potent "Radio Priest," Father Charles Coughlin, even though Capone was the more photogenic and the more legendary of the two.

Still, Evans's vignettes of nineteen presidents fit neatly into the structure of the narrative and are deftly done. Popping up like signposts on the American Century highway, they stretch from the relatively obscure Benjamin Harrison ("underappreciated," Evans says) to George Bush. Bill Clinton is waiting in the wings when the curtain drops. None of them escapes at least a soupçon of censure, and none is invidiously contrasted with a predecessor or a successor.

Evans can be trenchant and flip. Theodore Roosevelt "talked loudly, but he carried a small stick." Wilson "could not bear friends who took a different view on the big issues. They were judged morally corrupt." "It was a frail presumption that while Coolidge dozed, the invisible hand of the marketplace was sorting everything out." Hoover "seemed incurably suspicious that if his fellow countrymen were given a helping hand they would turn into sloths." "It was bewilderingly his [Franklin Delano Roosevelt's] style to take a step forward and a brisk step back." Truman "had the good will but not the imagination, and the odious Stalin had neither." "As well as the smile, there was a profane vocabulary and a volcanic temper that Ike himself feared." Kennedy "had no intention of letting marriage curb his compulsive womanizing." "But Johnson's style, bred in smoky caucuses, was to obtain a consensus from a tightly knit group of power brokers, and then to sell the public the most palatable version." "It was always Halloween in the Nixon White House. They were continually spooked by leaks." Ford was "dogged by a press image as a klutz who stumbled on staircases and ski slopes." "Under Reagan the normal creative tension of democratic politics often seemed like a set of parallel lines doomed never to meet, wandering out into cognitive dissonance." It says something about Evans that while observing the 1956 election from Adlai Stevenson's bandwagon, he should find himself "unaccountably" cheering for Ike, and that for him the only titans in his presidential procession are the two Roosevelts, with Teddy clearly his favorite.

The most remarkable feature of *The American Century* is the artful synchronization of its written text (historical commentary, biographical essays, captions, boxed inserts) with its visual text—a composite of cartoons, maps, drawings, and photographs (particularly the last) that complements the former like a musical score. Pictures of regional scenes and historical episodes, of politicians, judges, farmers, businessmen, gangsters, churchmen, soldiers, reformers, labor leaders, evangelists, policemen, and radicals punctuate the narrative flow. Quite a few must have been chosen because they shock, or are comically incongruous, or make strong political statements, or intangibly illuminate an occasion.



COURTESY ALFRED A. KNOPF

The Scottsboro Boys with their attorney, Samuel Leibowitz, circa 1933

Here is William Jennings Bryan on a lecture platform in 1896—at 35, he is not quite the "boy orator" but still theatrically handsome and charismatic. In 1913, a high-steel man balances himself sixty stories up on a narrow beam of the unfinished Woolworth Building, symbol of America's sky-assaulting temper. Five Roman Catholic clergymen, tough and confident soldiers of the Church Militant, stand (circa 1913) on the steps of St. Patrick's Cathedral, New York City, reviewing a parade. Two black men hang from a tree in Marian, Indiana in 1930, as a not-unpleased crowd of men and women, young and old, mingle decorously below the swinging corpses. Twenty-three-year-old Ronald Reagan, modeling for a University of Southern California art class, stands in shorts improbably poised to throw a forward pass. A dowager in furs, right out of a Peter Arno cartoon, glares at John L. Lewis as he walks past her, regal and aloof, in 1949. Dean Acheson, his face twisted with anger and embarrassment, is trapped in an elevator with his grinning nemesis, Senator Joseph McCarthy (circa 1954). The killers of Emmett Till (1955) smile complacently after their predictable acquittal. Betty Friedan (1963) dusts a bust of Abraham

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Lincoln ("my oldest hero"). In a Miami restaurant, Muhammad Ali, recent victor over Sonny Liston, looks impishly up at Malcolm X, who is snapping a picture of him (1964). President Johnson looms like an impending avalanche over a recoiling Abe Fortas (circa 1964). A grubby Billy Carter, the president's brother, drinks a can of beer in his grubby gas station (circa 1977).

Evans chose these and other photographs from the thousands gathered over twelve years by his "infinitely resourceful" collaborator and photography specialist, Gail Buckland. They concur, she writes in her acknowledgment to the regiment of archivists and curators who supplied her with materials, that "photography is not only a dynamic means of visual education but also a vital source in comprehending history," and that their book is a "marriage of texts and photographs, each having equal weight and power."

Words and images do interact synergistically in *The American Century*, and the photographs are more than merely documentary. They can be the equivalents of bitter editorials, as in Lewis Hines's astonishing study of the faces of four child-workers employed by the Pennsylvania coal company in 1911. They catch prominent people without their masks, sneak in sly social observations, make people ridiculous, tell jokes, blow life into the dead. (Scattered through the twenty-two-page bibliography are candid snaps of presidents from Taft to Clinton tossing out or catching baseballs, the easy motions of Eisenhower, Ford, and Johnson in contrast to the prim and awkward deliveries of Coolidge and Nixon.) Photographs of this kind, technically good or bad, can gloss and vivify a text, but they are just as slippery and prone to manipulation as words, and no less susceptible to willful distortion.

The size and the heft of *The American Century*, and its lavish pictorial display, might suggest that it was designed for coffee tables. In fact, it is the work of a very knowledgeable journalist and a very good writer who has studied the land, consulted a gamut of advisers, read a lot of books, and then drawn his own chart of America's "ebbs and flows" during its second century. He calls this distillation of selected personalities and events a "history for browsers," and he invites them to dip into or break out of the narrative at any point in his many hundreds of pages. It might also be described as an essayistic chronicle of American society and politics written with a few rhetorical flourishes, and as a brief for the author's adopted country. Evans is a fair-minded if not a completely impartial historian. Far from glossing over discreditable moments in the nation's history—in Emerson's phrase, its "mumps and whooping coughs"—he makes them sound as American as apple pie. The kaleidoscopic society that he scrutinizes is open and hedged, philanthropic and materialistic, peaceful and violent.

Evans neither dwells upon nor reconciles these contradictions, if such they be, any more than he tries to rub off the spots on the national escutcheon. He writes of endemic jingoism and "racism," of the crimes against Native Americans and black Americans, of the "pillaging" of the public domain, of creeping urban decay and the deterioration of the school system, and of the ever-widening gap between rich and poor. Yet running parallel to these blights are mini-stories about men and women, many of them obscure and forgotten, whose civic heroism is redemptive, and who must be reassessed, he writes, if we are to understand "how we have shaped our history." *The American Century* begins and ends with a sonorous affirmation: the country that "sustained western civilization by acts of courage, generosity, and vision unparalleled in the history of man" will endure "while freedom lives."

All the same, there is a whiff of the jeremiad in Evans's sermonical conclusion. Indeed, the last five chapters of his history (they cover the cold war, the civil rights movement, Vietnam, Watergate, and the "Reagan revolution") show the republic in its worst moments and its finest moments. His doubts and his reservations are not explicitly conveyed, for he has no ax to grind; but throughout the narrative—in sum, the story of shifting political groups together with the lives of individual figures who collectively incarnate his "America"—he has been admonishing and passing judgment sotto voce.

By the time he takes up the administrations of Nixon and Reagan, Evans's writing has acquired a vibrancy and an edge less discernible in his account of their predecessors, who by comparison appear through a historical haze. Here his subjects are people and topics that he has not merely read about, and he is boldly injecting himself into the telling. His talents coalesce in his ambivalent impressions of the outwardly simple yet very elusive Reagan—over-estimated and underestimated, brave and cheerful, politically canny, mentally slipshod—and his "brittle" wife. (Brittle?)

Anyone who reads through this thick encapsulation of a hundred years cannot but come away with a fresh perspective on the United States, and not simply those for whom ancient history begins about five years ago. At moments the book gives the impression of having been concocted and cobbled. Evans has not always digested the plethora of facts that his researchers have dug up for him, and sometimes he betrays his haste. No matter. His book is full of not easily obtainable information, and the writing throughout is spirited, uncluttered, and concise. The literate young will like its breezy colloquial tone and its untextbookish improprieties, and it will stimulate and provoke the historical-minded who have lived through a good chunk of his "American century," as it has stimulated and provoked me. ■

CORRESPONDENCE

continued from page 5

Artistic experience

To the editors:

Jed Perl is to be commended for probing some of Clement Greenberg's flaws ("Q.E.D.," April 12). But Perl does not go far enough. Although Greenberg has written astutely about painting, his philosophy of art is negative and destructive. At its heart lies Greenberg's assertion, as quoted by Perl, that art is experienced "not at all for what it might signify." This assertion is false. Art is experienced more than one way, and its significance, which derives from its representational content, is integral to that experience. Greenberg, of course, considered representation irrelevant to art. He was profoundly mistaken.

Perl is not quite accurate in stating that Greenberg, in his writings, "is dehumanizing art." Only an artist has the power to change art. As a critic, however, Greenberg appears to have encouraged and accelerated the preexisting drift toward a vacuous, dispiriting, and ultimately threatening dehumanization. For the future of our culture, it is important that Greenberg be understood as a failure.

Harvey Gordon
Kalamazoo, Michigan

The editors welcome correspondence from readers. Please address letters to: Correspondence, TNR, 1220 19th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036 (letters may also be sent electronically to: tnr@aol.com). All letters should include the writer's full name, address, and telephone number; be typed double-spaced; and be held to under 200 words. Letters may be edited for space. Please do not send letters via fax.

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Unprivate Property

FOR WHAT MUST BE THE NINTH time today, I have dialed up a complete stranger and, after briefly introducing myself, proceeded to reveal to him some of my most personal secrets. No, I'm not the victim of some rare psychological disorder as yet unlisted in the DSM. I am just one of the many foot soldiers in this spring's army of home buyers, shopping for a mortgage on a condo in Washington.

I USED TO THINK OF MYSELF AS A PRIVATE person, but the home-buying process quickly disabuses one of such illusions. Where once I would have cringed at giving out my Social Security number, I now find myself rattling off far more revealing statistics—how much I earn, how much I've saved, whether or not I have debts—as nonchalantly as if I were ordering toppings on a pizza. Soon I am pushing my most confidential documents through the fax machine: pay stubs, descriptions of my 401(k), my past three months' bank statements—complete with itemized listings of how many cappuccino frappes I used my bank card to purchase at what café and on what day. It occurs to me, as I watch the fax machine's little green "send" light go on, that there is always the chance I've entered in the wrong number. For all I know, some guy named Joe in Idaho could now be receiving my information dump. But then, that would be only slightly more bizarre than the fact that some guy named Faron from my mortgage company in Virginia will soon be poring over these materials.

THE IRONY, OF COURSE, IS THAT MY CURrent bout of exhibitionism is all in the service of a quest for privacy. After all, it is not just the "property" but the "private" in "private property" that makes it so attractive. Buying a home is a way of cordoning off a small corner of the earth for one's exclusive use. It is about creating a space in which one can live exactly as one chooses, free from the prying eyes of others. And yet, to obtain that space, we must first run a veritable gauntlet of prying eyes.

IT COULD BE WORSE. I COULD BE TRYING to purchase a place in London. A British friend of mine who recently did so found himself required to fork over not just his financial records but his medical ones, as well. The trouble ensued when my friend, a 20-something-year-old named Philip, decided to buy his flat with one of his former college buddies. Doubling up seemed like a rather obvious way to get a nice place in an overpriced market. But the company to which they applied for an insurance policy to cover their mortgage in the event of death found their plan just a tad, ahem, suspicious. Maybe, just maybe, the company reasoned, the two were a gay couple and, as such, in its view, a de facto "risk" investment. Terribly sorry, their insurance agent informed them, but he would need them to take an HIV test. Argument was futile, so Philip called up the nurse recommended by the agent to make an appointment. "When would it be convenient for you and your partner to come in?" she asked.

STILL, PHILIP SHOULD BE GLAD HE WASN'T buying a co-op. Whereas the rest of us manage to endure the intrusions involved in home-buying in the knowledge that closing the deal will bring those intrusions to an end, for co-op buyers the settlement date only marks the beginning. Take my best friend, Susan (not her real name), a single law professor who purchased a co-op not far from my condo some months ago. Soon afterward, Susan started dating a really terrific guy we'll call Eric. Things have gotten pretty serious between them, and Susan has decided it would be convenient if Eric could have his own set of keys to her apartment. But there's a hitch: according to the rules of Susan's co-op, tenants may not give out keys without the approval of the five members of the co-op board. Last week, Susan went before them to make her plea. After quizzing her on such topics as how often Eric comes over and for what purpose, the board members told Susan they would have to "think about it."

NEW YORK CO-OPS ARE REPUTED TO BE even more officious than Washington ones. They're interested not just in your net worth or your willingness to observe the house rules. They want to make sure you're the right sort of person. This may be preoccupying President Clinton as he contemplates a move to the Big Apple in the event that Hillary enters the New York Senate race. In a speech at the White House Correspondents' Dinner on May 1, Clinton joked about his likely prospects before a New York co-op board: "I've been filling one [of those applications] out.... You tell me what kind of chance we've got: Question Two: Anticipated employment—unknown. Question Three: Anticipated earnings—unknown. Question Five: Current residence—public housing.... Outstanding debts—Williams & Connolly, the House Democrats." Whatever Mrs. Clinton decides, home-buying will undoubtedly prove a novel experience for the first family. On the plus side, they're unlikely to be fazed by the invasion of privacy involved. Compared to Ken Starr, a loan officer will seem downright incurious.

IT'S NOW TUESDAY AFTERNOON, AND I'VE finally been given the condo documents. What started as a one-woman foray into the world of real estate has now evolved into a full-fledged drama costarring a cast of thousands. Okay, more like a cast of eight, all of whom, for some inexplicable reason, are men. There's the aforementioned Faron, my loan officer; Vince, my real estate agent; Roger, the property manager of the building I'm buying into; Richard, a contractor who is attempting to give me estimates for various remodeling schemes I've devised—"that depends" seems to be his favorite phrase; Danny, from the inspection service; Jason, the apartment's current owner; and Skip and Steve, the surprisingly good-natured current tenants who buzz me in every time I need to return for "one last look." What with all the time I've spent dealing with these boys, I've fallen out of touch with most of my friends. In fact, Faron, Vince, et al. have become a sort of surrogate group of friends to me. Just as I would with real friends, I call them at all hours of the day and all days of the week to obsess about minor matters. And like my real friends they know all sorts of trivial yet intimate details about me, such as the size of my bed and how late I work. Of course, the difference is I know next to nothing about them.

WHEN I FIRST ANNOUNCED THAT I WAS planning to be a homeowner, one friend quipped that I'd soon become a staunch conservative. And I must admit I have not found myself entirely untempted by a recently proposed D.C. property tax cut that one independent analyst says would likely prove disastrous to the city's fiscal health. Of course, John Locke established an individual's right to private property as a pillar of liberalism. So it is not by definition impossible to be both a property owner and a liberal. The degree of self-revelation required by this home-buying enterprise is, however, pushing me to consider libertarianism. Indeed, if things get any worse, one of these days I may wake up an anarchist. But at least I'll be waking up in a room that I own.

NURITH C. AIZENMAN

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